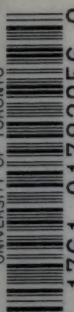


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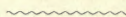
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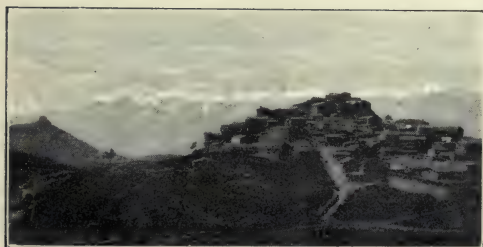


BOU HOMAR, A VILLAGE OF THE AURÈS.

Among The Berbers of Algeria

By
Anthony Wilkin

Author of
"On the Nile with a Camera"



A Berber Village.

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1900



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PREFACE

THIS book is intended to be a popular record of a journey undertaken with scientific objects, and it must not be expected that those objects—so far as they were attained—have left no trace upon its pages.

If, therefore, technical terms, technical discussions, have crept in and have been allowed to stay, it is because the writer has no wish to insult the intelligence of the reader by excising them on the supposition that the public care for none of these things.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to add that the bulk of the data can be found in another work, clothed in another dress, where those that take pleasure in the study of their fellow-men may examine in detail an account of the Berbers and their works.

The illustrations are all from our own photographs, be they good, bad, or indifferent, and such as they are it is hoped that they will help the text to tell its own story in a more picturesque way than would be possible without them.

The spelling of native names is French. Thus “ch” is “sh” and “ou” “oo.” W has been substituted for “ou” at the beginning of such words as “Wed,” where the value of the “ou” is consonantal. This system is nearly as clumsy as our own, but it has at least the merit of being

uniform and intelligible, and the French have every right to spell their own place-names as they please.

The sketch map does not profess to be anything more. It is not even a travelling map, and it adds nothing to our geographical knowledge. This should be borne in mind when the reader hears about the Hodna Salt Lake, otherwise the author would be justly hoist with his own petard. In short, the map is only added for the benefit of those who wish to know "whereabouts they are," which it would be impossible for them to do with any ordinary atlas of the country.

The few concluding remarks on Anti-Semitism in Algeria are perhaps sufficiently justified by the extracts from the local press which they contain. The solution of the problem of Anti-Semitism will make or mar the future of the country, and that is the writer's excuse for touching it at all.

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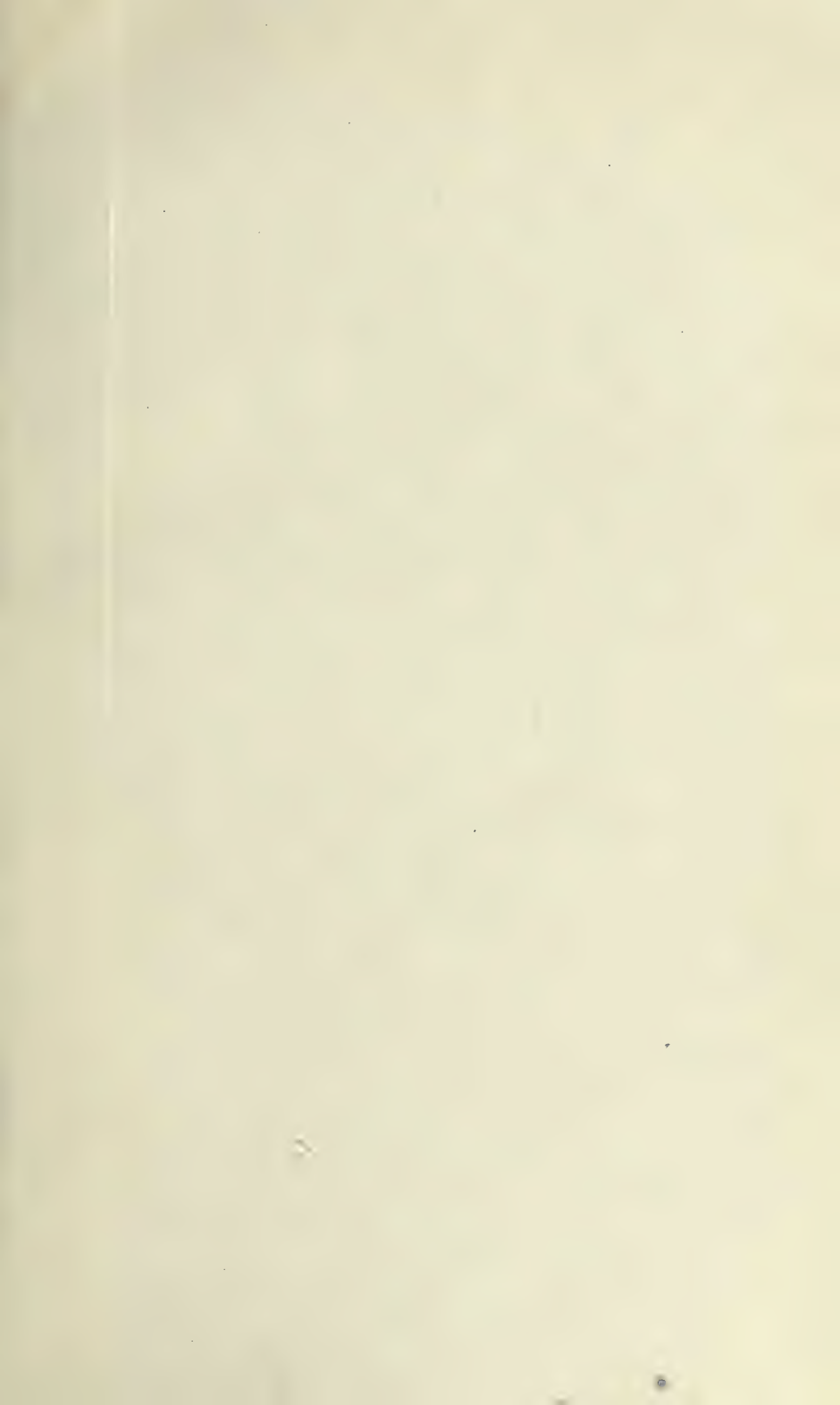
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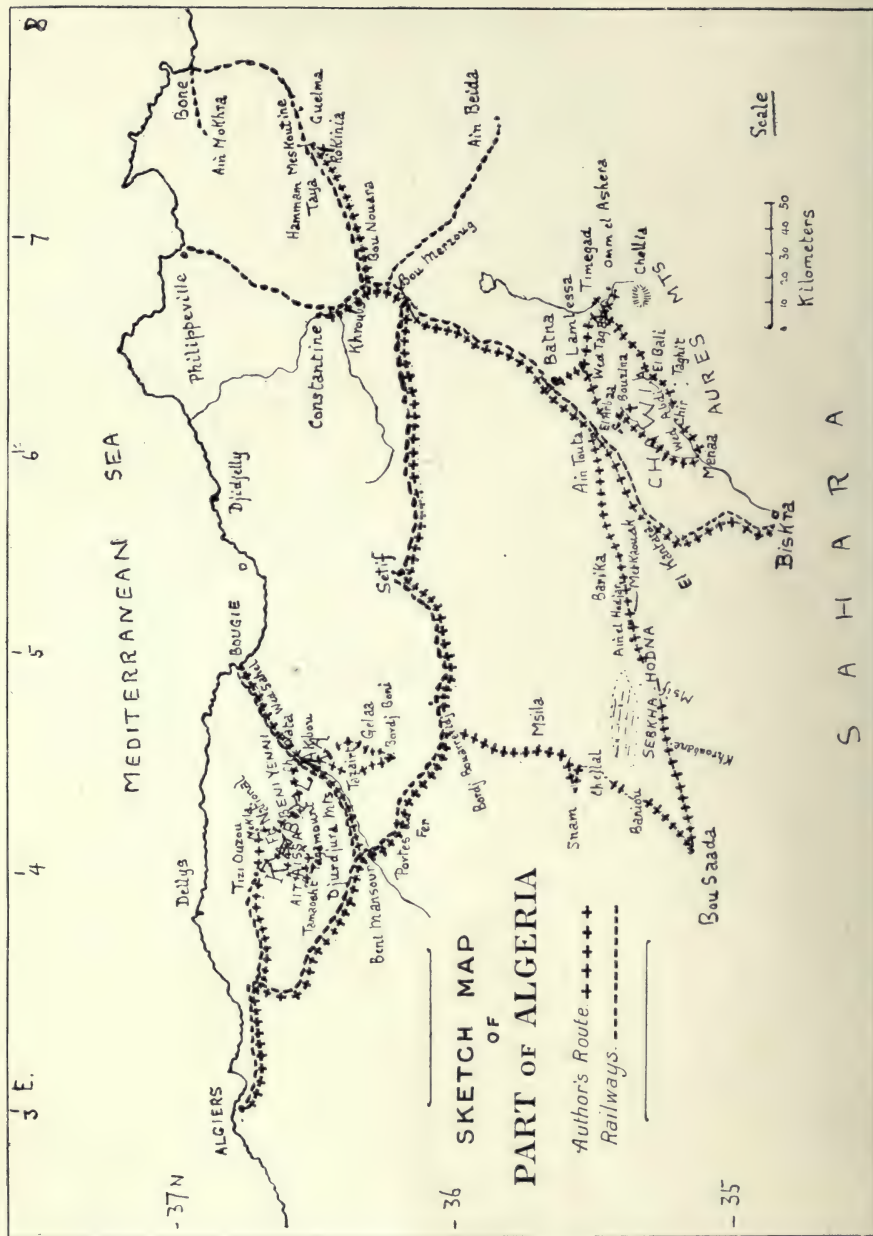
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Among the Berbers of Algeria

CHAPTER I

ALGIERS TO BOU SAADA

Algeria and the French—The “Tell”—“The Iron Gates”—A Walled Town and a Gathering of Chiefs—Diligence to M'Sila—In a Stone Cart—Megalithic Remains and Chipped Flints—The Hodna—The Deluge and the Desert—A Saharan Mud-town.

IT is not a hundred years since Algiers constituted at once a menace and a disgrace to European civilisation, since its corsairs infested the seas and swept together into its prisons Christian sailors of every Western state. Less than a century has elapsed since the consuls of the Powers were subjected to every kind of indignity by a Dey who not only set at defiance his master the Sultan, but enjoyed immunity from the natural consequences of his misdeeds by the exercise of that astute diplomacy of the East which divides the West against itself until it is self-neutralised—a colossus of no account. Even the Americans with their freedom from international ties, and the weakness those ties too often bring, had to bow the knee of humility before this arch-pirate.

When we remember this, and have recalled the exploit

of Lord Exmouth and his Dutch allies, let us not forget that it is to the French, and to the French only, that we owe a great work of reformation—the cleansing of one of the filthiest Augean stables in the modern world. Through every change of government and of party, under King, Emperor, and Republic, at the cost of much blood and treasure, they have persisted in the work. No millions of money, no millions of sturdy colonists have rewarded these efforts. The French nation has still to endure a drain on its resources, and that with little prospect of relief. In return it enjoys a sense of possession, the use of the word “colony,” and a consciousness of a great task well begun. Little as we are wont to over-rate the successes of our neighbours, let us, in this particular at least, give them credit for what they have accomplished; and, while criticising perhaps their methods, let us be thankful that we have not had to achieve their results. All this, and much more, Englishmen are willing to admit, if only the journalistic gutters of France, and especially of Algeria, stank less of Anglophobia and Anti-Semitism. What does not appeal to the head sometimes appeals to the pocket. Prejudice and ignorance have already prevented Algiers from becoming, as it bade fair to become, one of the first ports and coaling stations in the Mediterranean. Prejudice and ignorance are now endeavouring to deprive suffering humanity of an unrivalled health resort, and they will succeed if the people of the city and the provinces choose as their civic functionaries ruffians who have been exiled for their crimes, or ruffians who have only the spirit to incite others to commit them. The people who cursed the Sultan for killing Armenians have nothing to say to the demagogues who would massacre the Jews; still they will not risk their comfort and their skins, and especially their money, in a town where such men are revered as

patriots; and this the worthy or rather the worthier citizens of Algiers will shortly learn by sad experience.

It is strange to find within forty-eight hours (or less) of London a country into which few British tourists enter. Algiers they know, Tunis they know. Kabylia they have heard of. Of the rest they know and hear nothing; indeed, in more than one village we found ourselves the first English visitors, while in many the women and children had rarely before seen a European of any kind.

Very many people who have been to Algiers have been no further; others again have rushed through by rail to Biskra. The latter at least know what the former realise very imperfectly, that the *tell* or coast-country is the best if not the only good land in the colony. The high plateaux with their severe winters and scorching summers, long droughts and torrential rains, will doubtless in the course of time be brought under the plough of a European population. At present the settlements are few and far between, in general more remarkable for forts, loopholed walls and soldiers, than for farms, hedges, and agriculturists.

The nomad Arab is the curse of the country. Indolent, vicious, and unprogressive, he will burn a mile of forest to provide a few acres of bad pasturage for his flocks; and as Sir Lambert Playfair, who knew Algeria better than any modern Englishman, remarked, will, when he attempts agriculture, plough round a thistle rather than root it up. With the destruction of the forests the rainfall is either absent or, if present, immediately thrown off the barren hills into the shotts—the great salt pans of the interior, bearing with it millions of cubic feet of invaluable alluvium. Planting is the great need of these districts—woods, forests—anything that will give shade and hold moisture. Eucalyptus has been largely tried nearer the coast, but as

we had occasion to remark near Constantine, though it grows quickly and well, it will not endure the heavy falls of snow which may occur once every ten years. There remain the ilex, the cork-tree, and, where the scirocco does not blow, the cedar. All these are native to the country and would thrive slowly and surely if only the destructive Arab and his locust swarms of goats could be relegated to their natural habitat—the Sahara.

This land of rocks and sand, of smiling oases, the home of the date-palm, is the land also of the nomad Arab. There he can safely be left to spend his fury on the forces of nature, his fanaticism on divergent sects of his own religion. It is but necessary to guard the lines of communication with the trade-centres of the Soudan. No European population will desire for centuries to come to make this land their home. Whether it will ever be physically possible for them to do so is at present a question rather for those who love the by-paths of science than for practical men or politicians.

Of the Berbers there is much good to be said. Whether in the olive-clad mountains of Kabylia or the terraced valleys of their Aurasian fastnesses, they are white men, and in general act like white men. Among them the virtues of honesty, hospitality, and good-nature are conspicuous. It is not their misfortune alone that the lowlands know them no more; not their misfortune only that Mohammedanism has debarred them from entering as they would otherwise have entered on the path of European progress and liberality: it is the misfortune of the whole civilised world. Descendants of a mighty race whose culture once spread from the Atlantic to the Red Sea and the Hauran, from Crete to Timbuctoo and the Soudan, there are still to be found among them the vestiges of the arts and sciences, of the spirit of conquest, of the capacity for self-govern-

ment which, if developed, would make them again a great nation. It was to trace if possible their connection with the most ancient races of Egypt by the methods of anthropology, by collections of pottery, of designs, of physical measurements, and by observation of their everyday occupations, and of the monuments of their ancestors, that we left Dr. Flinders Petrie's camp in Upper Egypt, and after two uneventful voyages across the turbulent waters of the Mediterranean landed at the end of March in Algiers.

We had been a little afraid that our enterprise would be distasteful not only to the French authorities but to those who have the difficult task of promoting friendly relations between them and the English mariners and visitors. Our doubts were unnecessary. With a few words of caution touching our use of cameras in fortified towns and of our tongues among the Kabyles, Mr. Drummond Hay, the Vice-Consul, bade us a hearty Godspeed. Everywhere we were received by the officials with courtesy—often, as in the Aurès, welcomed with kindness and consideration.

We had heard of the warmth of Algiers and had unconsciously assumed that the whole country was almost semi-tropical. It was therefore with feelings of resentment that, as the railway bore us southward, we marked a decrease of temperature and an increase of clouds and rain. It was exceptional weather said our fellow-travellers. Of course it was! Whoever visited any country yet where the weather or the season were not exceptional? In England do we ever have a normal summer? or a normal winter? Certainly, if the account of the oldest inhabitant is to be believed, each season does more to violate natural laws than the last.

Another unpleasant surprise awaited us. The neigh-

bourhood of Algiers is well cultivated. The reddish soil is covered with vines and perennial flowers. Date-palms stand in the Place de la République and roses, wistarias and bougainvilleas bloom on the heights of Mustapha Supérieur. But as we left the *tell*, or coast lands, and wound laboriously up the valley of the Isser, the scenery became more and more barren and forbidding. Grey, cloud-capped mountains, from which streamed icy rain, succeeded one another in a long procession. Presently snow peaks began to appear through the rifts in the sombre canopy overhead. Kabylia, they said, lay just beyond and among those peaks. We congratulated ourselves on having decided to seek the sunny south before we entered Kabylia. There was no rain at Bordj-Bouarrerdj we were told—for it was there we were to leave the rail—there we should find sun and warmth—indeed, almost the Saharan climate. We nodded and shivered the cold shiver of unbelief.

As we approached the "Iron Gates" the scenery became really fine. Above us hung masses of rocks clad in dull green scrub and coarse—probably esparto—grass, from which numberless little yellow flowers peeped out. Beneath roared muddy streams in spate, their beds dotted with oleanders. Here and there groves of eucalyptus—pollarded in many cases, with what measure of success may be imagined—dripped disconsolately, weeping, one would think, for the bright skies of their native land. The mountains assumed grotesque shapes, of castles and battlements, of animals, but especially of walls and gates. The strata had been lifted by some subterranean convulsion into a vertical position. The harder layers stood out like the spines and shields on the back of some great extinct reptile, some as much as fifty feet high and not much more than a yard thick. Beyond the "Gates" the weather cleared somewhat, and we saw a rolling plain dotted with

bushes of Aleppo pine and juniper, Arabs and their flocks, nomad encampments, and beyond all the majestic chain of Djurdjura, their summits snow-laden. Towards Bordj-Bouarreridj—a name which is as trying to the tongue as it is to the eye—we left the fine country behind and found nothing but bare brown hills to gaze upon. The railway station was crowded with French officers and men in full dress, with spectators of all colours and conditions, and with a score of stately Arab chieftains. Among them were many of fair complexions; one in particular we named at once “John Bull.” John Bull had a round, good-humoured face of a bright peony colour, out of which twinkled a pair of light blue eyes. His flaxen beard and moustache fell down over the folds of a magnificent scarlet burnous, and his snub nose presented a remarkable contrast to the fine aquiline features of many of his neighbours. He was an Arab shêkh—doubtless of Kabyle origin, like many of the Arabs near the Djurdjura—but if he had been suitably attired and turned adrift in London, men would have wondered at seeing so obvious a Britisher at a loss to find his way and ignorant of his own language. A swarthy man in a fawn-coloured burnous beside him would have stood for a type of the purest Semite. The scarlet and blue of the soldiers’ uniforms, the rich burnouses heavily embroidered with gold, the snow-white *haiks* and turbans lent an air of enforced gaiety to the sombre surroundings. A mean walled town, only a few hundred yards from gate to gate, full of mean houses (of which the hotel was not the least mean), constituted the city of Bordj-Bouarreridj as reconstructed after the last native rebellion.

To-day, the flaps only made it by contrast more miserable. The representative of the Government had summoned the shêkhs from far and near to meet him, this being the

most comfortable and convenient way of assuring himself of their fidelity, and they were now seeing him off at the station with much cold politeness and formality.

The population was *en fête*. A band of loafers, stimulated to a feverish patriotism by numerous *apéritifs*, paraded the streets until a late hour, waving an enormous tricolour and chanting the Marseillaise, each in the key that pleased him best—for of such is liberty, equality, and fraternity. It may have been due to a guilty conscience, but we fancied that we heard mention made of the bravery of the Boers, and of the exceeding dirtiness of the nation to which we had the honour to belong, and we were glad to stroll without the walls to admire the heavy gold and black of the evening. It was certainly a picture: the cloud-pall and the almost Roman town in the foreground from which four roads radiate at right angles, but it was also unspeakably sad and depressing. The few tiny hovels by the roadside that sheltered the colonists from that chill, piercing wind served also to accentuate the utter desolation of the place. Scarce a bush or a blade of grass was to be seen. Only brown hills stretching interminably toward the sunset, whose passing glories were vividly reflected in the pools and streaks of water that furrowed without refreshing the arid waste of the plateau. It seems somewhat Pepysian to mention so trivial a detail, but I would add to this brief account of Bordj-Bouarreridj a high commendation of the local vintage. It is—or rather was—rich, sweet, and full of iron, like many Australian wines, and unlike the majority of Algerian, which resemble not good vinegar but bad, and are heady into the bargain.

The road from Bordj to M'Sila drops from three thousand to two thousand feet, and we were somewhat elated at the prospect held out to us of exchanging cold and rain for warmth and sun. "At M'Sila," said our half-

caste Arab driver, "it never rains." He might have added, had he been conversant with English, "but it pours." The diligence of the usual Continental type was full to overflowing. Inside were six Arabs. Three more were wedged into the coupé, and one of these was of very generous proportions. Beside the driver sat two more. On the top was stacked a great pile of goods and luggage reaching up to the tilt, and leaving a vacant space of roof some six feet square. In this space were bestowed five Arabs, whom our two selves, together with a Spanish halfa merchant, shielded from the bitter wind that came tearing over the hills from the west. There were thus ten passengers on the roof, but fortunately the road was as good as could be expected after the rains, and the pace was necessarily limited to about six or seven miles an hour.

Our Spanish friend was one among the many of his countrymen who have come to seek their fortunes in Algeria. Settling in some barren hollow of the inhospitable hills of the plateaux, they quickly build up a connection with the neighbouring Arabs, who bring them in the esparto grass from the mountains. It is then dried, bleached by the sun, and is ready for export. Practically the whole of this trade is in Spanish hands. The Province of Oran is much fuller of Spaniards than of Frenchmen, which, considering the interest always taken in the country by their forefathers, is not wonderful. If report speaks truly, however, this state of things is by no means to the taste of the French, who, it must be confessed, would seem to prefer in their possessions, to a non-French population no population at all, to trade not in French hands no trade whatever. At any rate, although they have perhaps never avowed such a policy even to themselves, it is the only explanation of the narrow tariffs and commercial restrictions with which they hamper even their own merchants.

"Algeria for the French" is a well-known watchword of the Algerian anti-Semitic press, and if it is at present levelled only at the Jews, when they are driven out or otherwise got rid of, it will be none the less applicable to the other aliens, Spaniards, Italians, Maltese, and even Arabs, whose assistance is now being enlisted in the cause of "all good anti-juifs."

The scenery through which we slowly made our way can best be described as a cross between the most uninviting tracts of Scotland and Spain. Its monotony was broken and the European illusion dispelled, by occasional herds of camels guarded by men who would describe themselves as Arabs, but whom fair complexions and grey and blue eyes often proclaimed to be the direct descendants of the original Berber population.

As we discoursed with the Spaniard about Regulus, Hannibal, and Marius, whose exploits, I must confess, were more familiar to him than to me, blue mountains appeared to the southward, their tops dotted apparently with scrub and sprinkled with a generous fall of snow. Every few miles a white-walled, red-roofed homestead, surrounded by a clump of blue gums and poplars, reminded us that we were in a civilised country. At one of these, with many hearty *à Dios*, we dropped our classical scholar, and betook ourselves to the examination of our other fellow-passengers, who were evidently already well posted as to our peculiarities, extraction, business, and intentions.

In Egypt we had been Khawageh, in Algeria we found ourselves Moghrabi—Westerners—the same name as is applied in the "Arabian Nights" to men skilled in magical lore. M—— conversed in Egyptian Arabic, but often found himself unintelligible, and indeed the differences of the dialects are very considerable. Scarcely one common word for common objects is the same in both. Neither

bread nor water did we recognise under their new names, and we missed—with what heartfelt gratitude I leave it to those who know the last to understand—we missed the magic sound, “bakshish!”

Midday came and went, and the road entered a long series of deep gorges sown with dwarfed Aleppo pines wherever a tree could find a place to raise its head. The mountain streams dashed past us, yellow with mud, towards the south, amid hills of red and grey and even green sandstone. The sky was stormy; the mountains purple black. In places they closed in upon us, their tops encircled by deep courses of seemingly cyclopean masonry. In other spots they had been tossed and tumbled like ocean billows until their strata ran in curves and rounded chevrons like the wave patterns in which the Berbers delight.

We refreshed the inner man and composed ourselves, as well as was possible when to loose one's grip was to fall off the diligence, to sleepy meditation and tobacco. Our reflections were rudely disturbed by one of the Faithful, who demanded of us the “*morceau de vin*” which remained in the bottle. Civilisation had evidently made strides. An Arab had learnt to drink wine, and to be unabashed in drinking. It is regrettable, but frequently true, that the most valuable precepts of the Mohammedan religion—its prohibitions of wine-bibbing and giuttony—are, as a rule, the first precepts, and often the only precepts, which succumb to European influences.

M'Sila at last; and behind it shining the still waters of the Hodna, bounded to the south by ranges of golden sandhills. The Hodna Lake—big and blue on the map—was before us. We asked about the lake: were there fish in it? Could one hire boats? Was there perchance a steamer or steam-ferry going in the direction of Bou Saada? The driver was dumb. He was stupid, we

thought, and again we abandoned ourselves to the contemplation of that magnificent sheet of water. M'Sila is planted with gum-trees, poplars, orchards, prickly pears, or Barbary figs, as the French say, and even date-palms, whose fruit does not, however, arrive, at perfection. It is a veritable oasis. The European settlement is not so lugubrious-looking as Bordj. The inn was good, save in one particular, and was kept by a French Basque who seemed desirous of working up a tourist business. There are said to be herds of gazelle in the district, and, considering how easy it is to reach, it might be worth a sportsman's while to go and see for himself. To the fisherman and yachtsman, however, excited perhaps by the thought of that magnificent lake full of unknown possibilities, I would say, defer packing your baggage until you have finished this chapter.

The Arab quarter is divided from the French by a fine stream spanned by a sound, but ugly and incongruous, iron bridge. Here the houses are all of mud, and cluster closely along the precipitous sides of the ravine. The distant snow mountains, the nearer green of the orchards and cornfields, make an agreeable and novel combination. Thick hedges of cacti enclose the fig-trees and apricots, which were beginning to put forth leaves. Over them looked shèkhs' tombs with pointed domes painted cream colour. All around little runnels of water carried freshness and fertility to the neighbouring fields.

We were in Algeria to study Berbers and not Arabs, so we hastened to inquire about the megalithic remains with which this part of the country is said to abound. Mine host had also heard tell of them. He summoned an Arab muleteer who knew them well, and to his guidance we committed ourselves. However, after a morning with this worthy we found that he had no archæological instincts,

no sense of direction which would steer him and us to the "place of big stones," and no knowledge of French; so we returned to M'Sila, leaving him to pursue his way with our luggage to Baniou, which seemed, on the map, to lie at the far side of the ferry over the lake.

Fortune now threw in our way a certain Signor Bellini, an Italian whose business it was to find stone for the road which will soon be completed to Bou Saada. He knew of



THE "CHARETTE."

the megalithic remains. Had he seen them with his own eyes? Certainly he had seen them. Would the signori condescend to be driven there in his *charetta* behind a mule that went like a steam-engine? The signori would be only too happy: they had no option. Accordingly the charette was turned into a cart by the addition of a board, upon which we took our seats. Bellini summoned his retainer—a Semite—grasped the reins, cursed the "steam-engine," and we were off. As we made our triumphal exit

from M'Sila in the charette, a *chauffeur*, arrayed in immaculate leather garments of the latest style, started *his* steam-engine in the contrary direction. It was an omen. After M'Sila there was no more road. However, what is impracticable for a motor-car may be negotiable by a stone cart and a mule of such parts, so we took heart and sallied forth into the wilderness with a good courage but with sore jolting and many bruises. If we wished to walk (as we did very much) Bellini remonstrated so piteously that we felt that expedient must be resorted to only in the last extremity. It was a choice of evils. Either we were to hurt his feelings or our own. To our credit be it said that we elected to be unselfish—at least until we had seen the megaliths of Snam. Occasional showers and a temperature of little more than forty, even at midday, gave us some apprehension for the night, for our blankets were at Baniou. But Bellini's reiterated assurances that it was all right rendered the outlook more promising.

I need dwell no longer on that weary trekking across the flat, scrub-covered plain. If it was somewhat tedious to us it would be more so to the reader. We encountered an Alsatian engineer who had contributed articles on Roman remains to the local papers. He too had seen Snam, and could make of it neither head nor tail. His card informed us that he "he did no business with Jews"—a small and contemptible straw, but a straw which showed us the direction of the popular breeze. For the accommodation of the Italian workmen employed on the road there was a canteen by an artesian well. All the rough work of navvies is done in Algeria by Italians, wherever, that is to say, the work needs something more than muscle. An Arab has little muscle and less brain, besides being incorrigibly lazy, so it is not wonderful that the wages he commands are minute.

The Government in its wisdom will not permit an alien to occupy any but an inferior position, so that this and every other engineering enterprise in the country is saddled with a small army of French foremen and inspectors, who, being *de rigueur*, are naturally often highly inefficient. At the canteen we laid in a good store of provisions, and after that Bellini had partaken with a fellow-countryman of the inevitable "Pernod," we embarked on the last stage of our journey.

If we had been jellies before, we were shuttlecocks now. First one wheel then the other mounted a thorn bush and descended to earth with a crash. Bellini implored us, almost with tears, not to descend. The mule snorted and strained, but justified her reputation as the finest draught animal in that locality. She had cost, Bellini explained, twelve hundred francs, and he was going to have value for his money even if we died from the effects of his kindness.

Night was approaching, the wind cut us like a knife, heavy drops of rain hissed through the camel-thorn on to the salt-impregnated sand. By the light of the last flickering red glow in the west we arrived at the summit of a solitary hill and found Snam spread out before us. We had hoped at most for a cromlech or two, a few "standing stones"; but here were stone circles upon circles, scores and hundreds of them, and, to complete our satisfaction, a rude stone hut with stabling and a thorn zariba around it. Night came down like a pall and hid these relics of by-gone civilisation. There was nothing to do for the present but to eat and drink and be thankful for the shelter of Bellini's cabin, wherein we discoursed to his mate in a mixture of all the Latin languages, for his own had been forgotten, of Uruguay and the Argentine, the United States and England; he had been far afield in search of his fortune, and was no nearer to it now than when he started.

They gave us up their beds : we refused (not entirely from unselfish motives) : they insisted : we succumbed to a fate which seemed certain. Nothing, however, but the howling of the wind disturbed our dreams—dreams of the strange old-time men who slept their last sleep beneath us, their dearest wife, their favourite horse and hound, slain, perchance at their death to bear them company. Visions of bloody fights, of sacrifice, of broken pottery and spear and golden ornaments buried with them, of ghastly wounds by axe and arrow-head of flint—all these and others chased each other across that unknown wilderness of brain to which the soul betakes itself while the body slumbers.

Snam—the name signifies an idol or a collection of big stones—is a low hill commanding all the northern and eastern shore of the Hodna. It contains but one type of prehistoric monument, and that is a type unknown elsewhere. In a few years there will be no more Snam, for the makers of roads and bridges and houses will continue to draw upon it for their stone. The hill is the only outcrop of rock for many miles, and however much we may regret the destruction of a unique monument, we can hardly blame men like Bellini for their share in it. The circles consisted of slabs of stone—some nearly three feet high and six or eight inches thick—with an indefinite collection of blocks in the middle. In the south-east of each circle was a recess lined with flat slabs and originally completed, Bellini said, with a covering stone like a dolmen. The whole structure measured from twenty to thirty feet in diameter, the largest (and most ruinous) crowning the highest part of the hill. The soldiers of a surveying party had utilised the stone to make a tower by way of landmark, and now the Arabs in Bellini's employ were loading fragments on to the backs of camels and making havoc as only Arabs know how to make it. We were

occupied for several hours in taking measurements and photographs on one of the coldest mornings I have ever experienced. Our fingers were almost too numb to write, yet Bellini, seeing us interested, stood by answering all questions to the best of his ability, and evidently sorry that his pocket and his inclination pulled different ways. He promised to preserve from further interference some of the finest tombs, and with that we had to be satisfied. The hilltop was littered with chips of worked flint—black with age and exposure—and of these we took away a good basketful. One or two of the circles had been opened, but Bellini regretted that they had found nothing. Probably a systematic investigation would reveal, if not skeletons, at least flint implements and fragments of pottery.

It was All Fools' Day. We wondered what was in store for us. We had not been disappointed with Snam, and our road to Bou Saada was plain. Still we did not escape. Bellini undertook to see us and our luggage right through, so we climbed once more on to the charette, the Jew following us on a horse which was intended to help the mule through the sand near Bou Saada.

In an hour we were on the track, which pursued a devious course over clumps of thorn and Jericho rose, through salted sun-dried mud and salter watercourses. A line of posts and wire indicated roughly the direction of Bou Saada. Our questions about the Hodna were evidently mystifying to Bellini. We showed him the map and pointed out that our course lay across the lake : was there a ferry? He was dumb with amazement. Presently we met our Arab with the luggage returning disconsolately from Chellal—the weather had been so bad he could not get further. Now Chellal was marked on the northern shore of the lake, and Baniou the other side, so we jumped to the conclusion that the sea had been running too high

to allow the ferry-boat to cross. It was a bad lookout for us, but Bellini seemed perfectly indifferent, and we awaited further developments.

Presently the scrub began to give place to cornfields, or what an Algerian Arab thinks is a cornfield. Chellal was in sight. We grumbled because the country was so flat. The slightest elevation we felt sure would reveal to our admiring gaze a splendid panorama of the lake and the mountains beyond.

We passed Chellal and began to think Bellini had mistaken his route, for if that were Chellal salt waves and not corn should, by the map, be rippling beyond. "Yes, that is Chellal," he said; "why do you ask? I know the road well. Sometimes it is so muddy here in winter that the diligence cannot pass, but that is all right now—we shall find Baniou in another six miles."

The truth dawned upon us. There was no lake at all. We had been completely fooled by some prehistoric geographer who drew the small salt pan that does exist towards the east forty miles long by twelve broad. He coloured it good and blue on his map, and all other map-makers (possibly the French Government map is accurate; I have not seen it) followed his lead ever afterwards. I knew that dictionaries could be made on these lines, but it had never occurred to me before that a new map was often only a highly-coloured *réchauffé* of an old one.

There had been we know not how many weeks' wet weather, but of the last few days we were sure that they had been moist in the plains and torrential in the mountains, and both plains and mountains drained into the Hodna. We found some muddy creeks, some pools of stagnant water two feet deep—for the rest the mud was hard and dry and often covered with scrub and Arab encampments, while the telegraph line ran boldly on

across the lake towards the mound of Baniou, half a dozen miles away, and telegraph lines are not usually conducted across an arm of an inland sea. The horse (saddled with a meal-bag on which it was necessary to preserve one's balance) made a welcome change from the hard planks of the charette, into which an Arab had been introduced besides ourselves.

Still in the bed of the lake we crossed a stream by a good bridge, and paused, as we mounted the sandhills on which Bordj Baniou stood, to look behind us. The evening light, fast fading in the west, gave to the level plain a whitish tinge—and I can well believe what Bellini said, that the midday sun shining on the blue-green scrub and patches of mud frosted with salt, would give to them all the appearance of a lake. Such was probably the effect we had witnessed from the M'Sila road.

The bordj, a solitary loopholed building at the top of the hill, contained stabling and rooms, in which we disposed ourselves. A huge fire of camel-thorn was soon blazing up the chimney, and the billy-can hissing for our tea. We were half suffocated by smoke, but we were at least warm and dry, so we ate and drank as little of the wine Bellini provided as possible—it was in colour magenta, in flavour worse than vinegar—but the tea put new life into all of us, even the Arab, who was evidently ill at ease among three Christians and a Jew. These bordjes were built in the first instance for the Government servants, but serve now as caravanserais for travellers. Some are kept by Arabs, some are completely empty, and to this latter class Bordj Baniou fortunately belonged. If properly provisioned they would make good rallying-points for the colonists in the not improbable event of another native rising.

The conditions under which we went to Bou Saada were well calculated for trying the capacities of the mule—"the

steam-engine." We had not left Baniou half an hour before it began to pour. Half frozen and wholly wet, we tried to maintain a sufficient circulation by walking; but the track was nothing but a series of watercourses some two feet deep, and the red alluvial clay was so slippery that it was literally impossible to progress more than a few yards without falling. We got rid of our shoes and socks, and found that with care it was possible to proceed bare-foot. In this way we covered some ten miles, though a false step often resulted in an excursion into a low thorn-bush; still, our feet being hard from desert-walking in Egypt, and nearly insensitive from cold, we did not suffer in this respect as much as might have been expected. The Jew and the horse had several falls together, from which they arose, plastered but uninjured, but the mule maintained her four mile an hour gait with hardly a slip or a stumble, Bellini smoking the pipe of contentment on the shaft of the cart.

Groups of Arabs loomed up out of the rain-mist, standing in circles around vast fires, the smoke of which went up in straight columns towards heaven. Clad in their white, sodden burnouses, the hoods about their eyes, they were praying for rain, rain, and again rain. Yet when the sun again forced a passage through the slow-drifting cloud-banks and drew the water in heavy steam-clouds from the reeking soil, none of us were more pleased than they. The patient draught-camels cropped thankfully at the thorn-scrub, and filled their reservoirs with a store of the precious though mud-polluted fluid that coursed so strangely between their feet. In half an hour the steam had cleared, the rivers had vanished, the slippery coating of mud was dry, and we saw the light post-cart from Bou Saada go past at a gallop with double teams of mules.

Such is the northern Sahara. Freezing one day, scorching the next; a marsh at nine o'clock, a desert at midday.

Little by little the thorn gave place to broom, the clay to sand. Gaunt masses of cliff rose at our right hand and dipped away steeply towards the south, where the dark groves and white minarets of the oasis nestled at the foot of the mountains. Among the dunes it is well to walk



AT BOU SAADA.

warily, for where the sand stands in cliffs cut steep and high by water it is unstable, and may fall upon the passer-by if he do but talk too loudly.

At last, up a boulder-strewn sandbank, the "steam-engine" slowed, jibbed, started again, and stopped dead. She was frightened at the corpse of another mule left to rot by the wayside, and tired, and all who were in the cart got out. Not once nor twice was this operation repeated. At each slope, whether the sand was deep

or not, the mule looked round and stopped. If we got out she would start, if we sat still no power at our disposal would move her—so much for magnanimity; even a mule will take advantage of it. In Bou Saada itself the road is, if possible, worse than outside—a wady between a mud wall and a bank of sandstone, strewn with boulders and irrigated by a number of small streams issuing from palm-trunk pipes. The greater part of the population is Arab, a fair proportion Jewish, a fraction French. A typical Saharan mud-town it is said to be with its fruit trees, runnels of water, corn patches, wady and date-palms, for Bou Saada is the highest and most northerly point in Algeria at which the date comes to maturity. Prickly pears abounded; shèkhs' tombs, similar to those at M'Sila; and a little yellow ranunculus, which climbed about the patches of coarse grass.

There is a citadel or fort overlooking the monotonous mud-houses and narrow lanes; at its foot the market-place, crowded with chaffering Arabs and Jews, buying and selling shoes, burnouses, silver ornaments, and carcasses of sheep and goats which are killed and cut up before the eyes of their companions.

We put up at the inn—kept by Parisians and consequently somewhat superior to the hostelryes of Bordj-Bouarrerdj and M'Sila. The stabling was disposed round a courtyard beneath the house. We sent Bellini's Jew to find an Arab who would take us to Barika. A handsome, intelligent man appeared, but as it had been our maxim in Egypt "the handsomer the man the bigger the rogue," M—— drew up a written contract, to which, after much persuasion, Hassan affixed his mark in the presence of witnesses. We had cause afterwards to congratulate ourselves on this transaction, which provided for all the varied forms of sharp practice familiar to the inhabitant

of the Nile Valley. In one particular this Algerian was too much for us. He asked and obtained, for we should not otherwise have started, money to shoe the animals, which he agreed to bring up for our inspection at daylight.

CHAPTER II

BOU SAADA TO BARIKA

The Animals and their Saddlery—Scenery near Djenane—A Difference of Opinion and a Would-be Marabont—Reception at Khroubane—Roman Remains at M'Sif—A Typical Conversation—Ride to Ain el Hadjar—A Robber Chief—More Roman Ruins—The Biter Bit—Barika, a Roman Colony.

AT six o'clock next morning our Arab arrived with four beasts—two mules and two horses—from which we were to choose three. One of the horses had four legs, and appeared to have been recently fed; the other had seen better days, and was not above twelve hands in height. Still he looked just the thing for a baggage animal, for it seemed that nothing once strapped to his angularities could ever roll off, and we accepted him with resignation. Of mules we knew nothing as yet, so we chose the one whose forelegs seemed to contain joints, the stiff wooden props upon which his companion listlessly leaned being suggestive of inefficiency. We forbore to examine their feet for shoes, for it was very probable that the money already paid for such shoes had been diverted from its original purpose, and had we officially noticed their absence we should have been forced to waste further time in discussion and delay. As luck would have it, the remains of the old shoes lasted, in the case of the

horses, till the end of the journey. As for the mule, he had never had a single pair in his life, and was none the worse. The rest of the gear was typical.

The well-nourished horse boasted a fine red morocco-covered saddle, with a cantle like an arm-chair back and a peak like that which caused the death of William the Conqueror. Out of such a saddle it is difficult to be thrown: into such a saddle it is not easy to ascend; but when, once the rider plants his feet in these two huge, clanging, mediæval stirrups and leans back luxuriously in the arm-chair, he realises that an Arab's horsemanship need not be so wonderful as it is represented in the story-books, and that in this, as in other respects, he may be somewhat of a fraud. As a fact, most Arabs ride very well bareback from their youth up, but to see a shêkh perched in one of these saddles, with his knees drawn up to his chin and his hands about the same level, is somewhat of a shock to any one versed, however slightly, in the methods of English equitation.

The bridle was new, comparatively; the bit was tight, severe, and, in the hands of a novice, as disconcertingly sudden in its action as a band-brake on a bicycle.

The other horse and the mule were more simply caparisoned in halters and *tellises*. A *tellis* is made of two big striped sacks, with the ends left open and sewn together lengthwise in such fashion that the seam runs down the backbone of the animal wearing it. Into these sacks were thrust blankets, bread, cameras, wine, sausages, mutton, and forty-eight hard-boiled eggs—provisions for four days. The open ends were then turned back, and if the rider was not too long in the leg, the folds made a very good substitute for stirrups. It need hardly be said that a blanket or two, placed over the *tellis*, did much to remove the illusion that we were riding lean milch cows.

It is not good to remember for eight long hours a-day that one's mount has a backbone of unseemly prominence. I have written this much because we travelled almost exclusively during our stay in the country on just such animals.

Our good friend Bellini left at an early hour in his charette, the mule still going like a steam-engine, and the Jew kicking the horse into a trot every few yards in order to keep pace with her.

At length the interminable process of starting was over : our Arab had interviewed his wife or wives, had borrowed a drinking-cup and new ropes for the pack animals, and had persuaded a friend of dark complexion and surly demeanour to bear him company—this friend not being included either in the contract or in the provision of food. The sun shone out through the palm groves as we blundered down steep, narrow tracks strewn with loose stones. All nature was green and cheerful after the recent heavy rains. The fruit trees were in full blossom in the gardens to either side. The birds sang as they sing in England in the springtime. Runnels of water trickled and tinkled in and out of the mud-walls or fell in cascades among the cacti from pipes cut from the palm trunks. Soon the mud-houses disappeared and the gardens deserted us as we scrambled into and out of a wady filled with oleander bushes. The desert of rock and sand was in front, the oasis behind. Slowly we won through the belt of sand-dunes, covered with dwarf scrub, down into the old level bed of the Hodna, where the salty clay was already dry and cracked by the sun. A few brooms and yellow ranunculi straggled about in the camel-thorn, which split the track into a dozen barely distinguishable footpaths. Great droves of sheep and goats passed, driven by families of nomad Arabs, whose women were often

mounted on camels among the household furniture. The children walked or rode in pairs on diminutive asses; the men, according to their age and importance, either went on horseback or trudged wearily behind their herds, their burnouses thrown back upon their shoulders.

At midday we halted and off-saddled. Of the mash of forty-eight eggs we ate as much as possible. An Arab is never weary of munching hard-boiled eggs and dates, and we were relieved to find that our men had brought some of their native bread with them and that they seemed to prefer it to ours. The sausages were loathsome, and the remains of them haunted us to our journey's end. We found that water from a goatskin was more palatable than the ordinary wine with which we had been provided, so that when, on resuming our march, we noticed a suspicious trickling from the corner of a *tellis* we contented ourselves with abusing the man who had packed it, and wondering what true believers thought of infidels who drank such pernicious stuff.

Our speed steadily dwindled from three miles to one mile an hour. The dark line that marked the palm-groves behind us grew imperceptibly smaller, the dim outline of the mound at Baniou loomed upon the north-western horizon and seemed neither to approach nor to recede. The rugged, contorted mountains to the south were filled with blue hollows and flecked with cloud shadows which passed and repassed, yet they, too, did not seem to present any new features as the time went on. We had begun to feel drowsy. Even Hassan and Abdullah had ceased to chatter, and only an occasional "Er-r-r-r" stimulated the horses to renewed exertion. M—— got off and walked to improve the pace. We had yet twelve miles to do and only three hours' daylight left to do them in. One after another two or three villages marked by poplars

rose above the horizon. These villages are built about artesian wells sunk by the French. Each well is surrounded by green grass and trees, but only the larger oases are inhabited, the smaller ones supplying water to miserable patches of cultivation, for the nomad of the Sahara is probably one of the worst agriculturists in the world.

At Djenane a lively discussion took place between our men, the local authorities, and ourselves. We wished to reach Khroubane that night; Hassan, Abdullah, and their friends at Djenane had other views. "Khroubane is far, oh my master; 'twere better that we wait here and depart again in the morning." This from Hassan. Abdullah added an emphatic "Walla" to nearly everything his friend said, whether good or bad. ("Walla" corresponds very nearly to the English vulgarity, "S'welp me!") We were obdurate. It was true that the afternoon was far advanced. It was true that the horses and mule might have looked fresher; but we foresaw that to give in on this point would be to lose a day, and our days were likely to be more valuable later on. No, we would proceed and take our chance of finding water and lodging for the night. "There is none," said Hassan. "There is," we replied—not because we knew, but because it was so marked on the map, whereat they all wondered. At this point Abdullah, who had some pretensions to being a holy man, began to declare that he would rather have had his beard plucked out hair by hair than accompany such infidels. He swore it on the Koran; he swore it by Allah. "*Imshi, imshi, imshi!*" ("Go, go, go!"), he yelled; "*Ba'dên môd! Walla!*" ("By and by dead!"), at which point we resumed our journey, leaving the irreconcilable Abdullah to follow or not as he pleased. Presently he recovered his temper and rejoined us; so soon afterwards we both got down and bade the

men mount in our places. Hassan was not averse to riding, Abdullah again perjured himself by swearing he would not. After we had driven the cavalcade half a mile through the sandhills he thought he had been obstinate enough to "save his face," and scrambled up on to the already overladen mule, from which point of vantage we summarily ejected him. Again he swore that he would ride the mule and no other beast, but another half-mile saw him seated on the spare horse pouring a piteous tale of woe into the ear of the smiling Hassan. Neither of us had ever acted as "burro-puncher" before, but by dint of a steady flow of pious ejaculations in several languages we triumphantly covered the last four miles in less than an hour. The map was, fortunately for us, inaccurate in that it placed Khroubane several kilometres further from Djenane than it really was. We had yet to learn that it was also inaccurate in describing the former place as a suitable point at which to pass the night.

When two Arabs ride and two white men walk there is surely something amiss, thought the few inhabitants of the three or four dirty mud-huts and tents that surrounded the artesian well of Khroubane. Our reception was cold. "Could we have lodging for the night?" "No! But, stay, here was a very eligible shelter"—we were conducted to a ruinous hen-house about six feet square, with little or no roof and abundant promise of fleas. It was nearly dark: rain threatened. We called for the shêkh, and presently found him at prayer behind his hut. "Could we pass the night under his roof?" He replied in no uncertain tones that we could not. We might be anything, and were probably robbers—in any case we had better move on. Was this, then, the traditional hospitality of the Arabs? We were persistent: we could not believe our ears. We were Englishmen and no robbers. It was

the word "Ingilizi" that procured us a night's lodging. The shêkh's face brightened—doubtless because he recalled stories of the untold wealth of Englishmen; he paused and relented. We were good friends of the Sultan, were we not? Unblushingly we consigned the Armenians to oblivion and replied that we were. Whereupon he sent for carpets, and in a few minutes we were ensconced in a mud-room, eight feet by eight, lighted by the doorway and



OUTSIDE OUR QUARTERS AT KHROUBANE.

a feeble oil lamp, with our animals picketed inside the thorn hedge of the encampment, and our scanty store of comestibles displayed upon the floor within. A big fire was lit in the entrance, so that the smoke drifted into the room. We were immediately invaded by the shêkh, his son—a small and dirty boy with the whooping-cough—and as many of their male relations and friends as could be packed into so small a space. They sat still and re-

garded us with the same expression as a dog wears when he begs a biscuit. A bowl of milk was produced and drunk.

We carved great flakes of meat from the mutton and offered them with our own right hands to our hosts. They were reluctant—to accept hospitality from a guest? No; only reluctant because Abdullah suggested that the meat was pork, or that it had been improperly killed. However, such vain scruples were quickly dispelled, and with them a large proportion of our provision. None ate more heartily than the boy with whooping-cough, whom his father evidently believed to be at the point of death. We gave him some quinine tabloids next morning—the only medicine we possessed—but not enough of them to kill the child if he ate them—as he probably would—all at once. Our one regret was that we had nothing nastier to bestow. All four of us slept in the one hut, and how many other human beings I know not. Of one thing I am certain: there were at least a million insects, which we spoke of by courtesy as sandflies. Outside, the frogs croaked in the marsh below the fountain; inside, Hassan and Abdullah snored the sleep of just men, while two “Moghrabi” endured the tortures of the damned.

Morning dawned at last. The white saltfield of the Hodna gleamed bright in the cold daylight. A chill wind played among the thorn bushes and caused us to comment forcibly upon the character of so-called sub-tropical climates in general and that of Algeria in particular. A hasty meal was snatched, at which our host took care to be present, but as it consisted chiefly of tinned meat of doubtful extraction, and as the watchful eyes of the pious Abdullah were upon him, he derived little advantage from the assiduity of his attentions. A suitable souvenir—current coin of the Republic—was left

behind. Perhaps the next visitors to Khroubane will hear of the great magicians who cured a sick child, who fed the encampment, who were possessed of untold wealth, and who were just as surely possessed of several devils, for they walked afoot faster than a horse, and belaboured man and beast without distinction, impartially and continually.

The track led through sandhills similar to those we had previously passed. These were the golden shores of the "lake" which had greeted our eyes as we drove on the diligence into M'Sila. Only opposite Khroubane had the overflow from the fountain created a slight pond—the one solitary piece of water, a few acres in extent, which is to be found throughout the length and breadth of the great blue patch of the Lake Sebkhah Hodna, as it is shown upon the maps.

A clump of poplars with a bubbling well marked an artesian boring. The monotony of the landscape was otherwise unbroken, save by a thousand ungainly heads and necks of camels grazing on the salty scrub: camels red, brown, black, grey, and white, shaggy and almost fleecy—for the winters of the high plateaux are cold, and we were indeed near the northernmost point reached by the ship of the desert. To the left, as we topped a range of low sandhills, we saw the dazzling expanse of the Hodna, furrowed by tracks of man and beast—red lines and dots upon a white surface. The very track was rimed with salt, like hoar-frost on an English winter road.

Soon after midday M'Sif hove in sight. A few mud-huts, a few tents, a little patch of sparse green corn, and that was all. Goats and sheep were wandering disconsolately in search of pasture under the guidance of bronzed Arab boys, clad in ragged burnouses, which they held closely wrapped about their meagre frames. Descending

from the sand-dunes, we encountered a wady—and a wady containing so much water that the horses were afraid and had to be led by the mule. Perhaps they had never seen so much of it in their lives before—twenty yards across and a foot deep, full of salt, but still water, and a river to boot. The banks were lined with thick bushes not yet in leaf; on the far side were more patches of miserably ploughed fields, through which we floundered in search of the “Great Stones”—the megaliths which were reported on a neighbouring hill. We had been more than six hours in the saddle, and had had little to eat before we started, so that if we were displeased when we found the megaliths to be common Roman remains lying amid Arab graves and heaps of coarse Samian ware, it was not wonderful. We had dreamed dreams of cromlechs and dolmens; had pictured a Stonehenge littered with flint arrow-heads; and here was the fulfilment of our expectations. Wearily we ascertained that there was nothing more to see, ate our frugal meal almost in silence, and were hardly entertained by the wolf-like proceedings of Hassan and Abdullah as they tore the last shreds of meat from our mutton-bone and then smashed it with a stone to extract the uttermost fraction of the marrow.

To tell the truth, Abdullah was in ill odour with us: he had never once stopped grumbling all the way from Khroubane, while Hassan had made himself little less objectionable by minute inquiries into our domestic affairs at home. My own knowledge of Arabic is strictly limited, but M—— tells me the conversation had been mostly after this fashion.

HASSAN: “The Moghrabi (Westerners) tell me they have but one male child between them.” (This was untrue, but we felt it incumbent upon us, since the worthy man thirsted for information, to pose as fathers of families.)

ABDULLAH: "Thanks be to God, for there are already many Infidels."

HASSAN: "And they have great herds of sheep and goats and much money in their country."

ABDULLAH: "Walla, for all Englishmen are rich beyond belief. What thinkest thou, they will give us over and above that which is written?" (*i.e.*, the contract).

"Perhaps, please God, two douros (dollars); perhaps more, for they are very rich."

"I would fain mount the mule, oh Moghrabi, be pleased to wait a little."

"Leave the mule alone; he has enough to carry without thee, oh lazy one."

"Thou art a black man [*i.e.*, a hard man], my master, walla, thou and thy companion also."

"Be silent, son of a dog, thy beard grows grey before the hair of thy head" (*i.e.*, "your jaw is worked a good deal harder than your brain").

"The Moghrabi carry their money in belts around their bodies, oh Abdullah; they are merchants."

The mule stumbles and nearly treads on Hassan's foot. "Quel juif! ¹ Oh son of a thief! Mar-r-r-che!"

So we marched, while Abdullah told his beads and called down curses on our heads, and Hassan bored us with impertinent inquiries.

But to return to M'Sif. The hill where lie the Roman ruins was probably the site of an inconsiderable military station which guarded the oasis against the attacks of the wandering desert tribes, who then, as until recently, acknowledged no master save their own lust for rapine

¹ This expression is in common use among Frenchmen and Arabs alike throughout Algeria. It is only one among many examples of that ignorant, blind, anti-Semitism to which I shall have occasion to refer in another place.

and bloodshed. There is now little oasis to guard, for the Arabs have long since destroyed the Roman irrigation channels and trampled their wells into quicksands. A few palm-trees are round another small settlement in the valley, and the hill is crowned by a ruinous bordj containing traces of Roman masonry in the shape of well-cut and squared blocks of stone.

Our midday halt was short, for we wished to reach Ain el Hadjar (Well of the Stones) before dark, and hoped to find there megalithic remains, which, as the name suggested, were said to exist in the neighbourhood.

To our front the low mountains closed in and formed a col over which the track zigzagged in an aimless fashion. Abdullah, in a worse temper than ever, trotted behind us seeking short cuts through the camel-thorn, to the detriment of his feet, and finding none. Now telling his beads, now resting a moment to go through the formulæ of prayer, he seemed to be endeavouring to qualify himself for a marabout—a man of holiness and culture. Hassan stumped behind in his sandals, more philosophically but less ostentatiously. He had his reward in changing places with one of us at the top of the pass.

In the shadow of the barren hills close to the summit a great savage dog seemed to be hunting ravens. Half-starved and bloodstained, he growled with anger at our approach. The horses snorted and shied. The carcase of a camel stripped of its hide, its legs already devoured, lay close to the path. It was for the still fleshy ribs that the ravens and dog were fighting, and the sounds of their strife followed us to the top of the pass.

Below us lay an undulating country covered with tamarisk and thorn, intersected by salt watercourses and bounded to the left by the silvery expanse of the Hodna, dotted, so it seemed, with islands and fishing-boats, but

really with patches of unwholesome mud and scrub. In the distance the hills rose into mountains and merged themselves in clouds whose ruddy shadows told of desert beneath. In the valley we crossed several salt pans, now fortunately dry for the most part. Here and there were wells full of brackish water. It was a stern, grey, forbidding land, this Little Sahara, and we were glad to reach the bordj of Ain el Hadjar before sunset. Here



A SALT-PAN OF THE HODNA.

was a good stone castle built under French direction for the benefit of travellers. Its walls and towers were loop-holed for rifle fire, and the courtyard was closed by massive gates. Without was a spring of clear, fresh water and some small show of young corn and tamarisk-trees. A passing troop of camels bearing Arab women, shielded from view by rich crimson curtains that swayed and bellied like sails upon a tossing ship, lent life and colour

to the scene. We were welcomed by the shêkh and his brother, both handsome men, clad in sky-blue burnouses which set off to great advantage their clear-cut, bronzed features and stately carriage.

We demanded couscous of Shêkh 'Ali and fodder for the beasts. He said we could have whatever we liked if we paid for it. Rich carpets were spread by way of beds, and we ate altogether round a mat on the floor. 'Ali,



THE HODNA FROM AIN EL HADJAR.

whose French was of the worst—*mouton* and *montagne* sounding exactly alike as he pronounced them—said that he was going to-morrow (*domân !*) to Barika, and would help us to get lodging, for how could people who did not understand French venture to travel alone in the country? We thanked him for what we took to be kindness, even though it was obviously founded on ignorance and conceit. We were to learn that if his vanity was great his cupidity was even greater. Indeed, Shêkh 'Ali did more to disgust

us with his countrymen than any other person, including Abdullah.

This was our first experience of couscous. We ate with a wooden spoon to each pair of diners, the dish being in the middle. This food is so well known, at least by reputation, that I will not describe it. Suffice it to say that it is a very poor substitute for bread and meat.

While we drank our coffee Abdullah recounted his hard treatment to the assembled company. His statements were received with some merriment. I suspect that he was a well-known character, and we presently dismissed him and Hassan to sleep in another room, which they were very reluctant to do.

What with the curiosity of the shèkh and his family, the periodical incursions of a big yellow dog, who seemed never tired of incurring punishment, and the queer noises made by the horses, mules, sheep, goats, and camels with which the courtyard was packed, we found it difficult to sleep. They told us that the robbers made it necessary to shut all the animals into the bordj at sunset, and I can well believe it, for Shèkh 'Ali himself tried to extract the money from M——'s belt during the course of the night.

Enough of last night's fire was left to warm some coffee before we started, which we did in very good spirits, though the weather was cold and threatening. 'Ali overtook us on his handsome Arab mare, and promised to show us the place of "great stones." His brother rode a fine camel in our wake. We mounted Hassan on the mule, and I took Abdullah up behind my saddle, the cantle being sufficiently high to prevent him investigating the contents of my belt and pockets. This arrangement had an additional advantage, for whenever Abdullah's tongue began to grow long I put the horse to a trot, which shook him so much that he could not find breath

for further speech. In this way we covered at fair speed a barren, uninteresting country. Once or twice it was necessary to cross salt pans in which the beasts sunk knee-deep, but Shêkh 'Ali knew the fords, and we were never in serious difficulties. Presently the mound of Mekhaouak was reached, and here, said our guide, were many great stones of the Romans. All remains—historic and prehistoric—are “Roman”¹ in Algeria, but on this



THE BORDJ OF AIN EL HADJAR.

occasion the term was only too well applied. We were on the site of a small military outpost which had guarded the road from Barika to M'Sif and the west. Moreover, the French had removed the inscribed and best-cut stones to build the bordj of Ain el Hadjar and the colonial town of Barika, while Arabs had dug graves among the remainder, so there was nothing to see except an excellent view of the Hodna.

¹ Just as in England they are “Cesar's Camps.”

Between Mekhaouak and Barika there were everywhere sporadic attempts at cultivation. The ground was wet, slippery, and clinging, so that it was difficult to move faster than a walk. Skylarks sang in the greyness overhead. Two solemn storks paused in their search for frogs to look at us.

About midday we came to a dead stop. Some Arabs were sitting about a small haystack, and nothing would do but that Hassan and the shêkh should buy some of it. M—— and I looked at one another knowingly, for well we understood who it was who would be called upon to pay. With unwonted energy they stuffed a huge sack so full that the seams began to give way. They stuffed another to balance it, and stowed them both on the camel. We smiled our approbation. The vendors of the hay named a high price, and our men accepted it in the belief that we would settle the account. Wherefore, when we declined to do anything of the kind, there was much mutual recrimination. Everybody was affirmed by everybody else to be a pig and the son of a dog, a descendant of many generations of robbers, and many other things, too, which shall pass untranslated. We two Moghrabi alone hugged ourselves with delight. The fact is that most of these Arabs are constantly engineering some form of theft, but they are so stupid and so greedy that they frequently hoist themselves with their own petards.

After this incident the conversation which, among Arabs both in Egypt and Algeria, rarely turns on anything but money matters, became more and more financial.

Shêkh 'Ali declared by all he held holy that we had given him for his hospitality "not four francs, nor three francs; no, nor even two francs"—which was the truth, for he had had a five-franc piece. Abdullah, whenever I

allowed him a minute's quiet, cursed us. Hassan joined him, and the four began to concoct a scheme for fleecing us in Barika.

As we approached the place and crossed the stream, which was rather full, its sides perpendicular and its bed ten feet below the level of the alluvium, the crops of barley and wheat improved in appearance. For the first time since leaving Bou Saada the track became carriageable, or rather practicable for carts, though "carriageable" it was marked on our map all the way. Barika is a small and dirty township of mud-houses, with a fort at one end. A few Frenchmen live in the main street, and there are two canteens for the benefit (or otherwise) of the garrison, which numbers under three dozen souls. We asked for a hotel or inn. "There is none," said Shêkh 'Ali (though he had affirmed the previous night that there was, and that it was kept by a Frenchman, who would be unable to understand us). "But I will show you where to put up." One look at the place was enough. Its exterior suggested fleas and extortion—it was the mud-house of one of his friends. "No," we said, "we are much obliged, but would rather see the Commandant himself than inflict ourselves again upon your hospitality." Finally a native-born Frenchwoman and her husband agreed to turn out a store-room for us to sleep in. We were very fairly comfortable under their roof (which leaked a little all the same), not so much because the accommodation was good—it was not—but because they were hospitable souls, and, living in Barika, welcomed us as white men first and Englishmen afterwards.

As for Hassan, Abdullah, and their allies, they had proved the truth of the adage, "In vain in the sight of the bird is the snare of the fowler displayed." They had lied to us, had attempted to steal from us, to swindle us,

and generally to make the uttermost farthing out of us. Having failed, they came with smiling faces and honeyed words to demand their wages. These they received, together with a substantial bakshish—more than they deserved—but we wished to impress them with the fact that though we were not fools ourselves, we were disposed to be generous to those who were.

The rain poured down as we drank *café au lait* out of huge bowls and munched white bread and chocolate. It seemed as if we had been months instead of days away from civilisation. The preconceived notion that we should find our friends among the Arabs and Kabyles rather than among the French had received a rude blow, and we looked forward with some anxiety to the weeks that were to come, for the Kabyles might prove to be even as the Arabs, and if such were the case it would augur ill for our work.

At Barika there are genuinely interesting Roman remains, of which the local authorities have not scrupled to make use. Fatigue parties of soldiers collect the best-preserved stones, and loading them on to trucks run them into the township for building purposes. Two or three well-preserved inscriptions are let into the barrack-wall, from which we learnt that the colony dated from the time of Commodus. There are still acres of ground covered with broken pottery awaiting the spade of the excavator, and the sites of the racecourse, forum, and citadel are still to be traced. Much as the natives rejoiced in the deluge to which the country was being subjected, we found that it made walking very laborious, and as we were to leave early we had great difficulty in drying our clothes.

Our experiences on the High Plateaux and in the Little Sahara, from M'Sila to Bou Saada and Barika left

upon us an impression that remained uneffaced during the rest of our stay in Algeria. Nowhere else did we encounter such weather, such country, and such people, and it was with a feeling of thankfulness that we ordered the public vehicle—a waggonette of antique pattern—to call for us on the following morning.

CHAPTER III

BARIKA TO BISKRA

Bad Travelling—Ain Touta, Les Tamarins, and El Kantara as French Colonies—El Kantara—The Gorge—Roman Remains—Arab and Negro—Garden of the Château Landon at Biskra.

BARIKA prided itself on the possession of a public vehicle, which made the journey to Ain Touta—the nearest railway station—in as few hours as circumstances would permit, and whenever anybody desired to go. This “diligence” we bespoke for an early hour next day. It arrived before the sun, and we foolishly allowed the driver (a half-caste from his inability to speak French, though one can never be sure in Algeria, where so many nationalities are gathered together, and where the natives are, for the most part, at least as white as their masters) to muster our luggage for us. We bade our kind host and hostess farewell with the more gratitude in that we had escaped what the outward appearance of our quarters had seemed to promise—a night of “sandflies.” A miscellaneous team of horses and mules, about five in all, dragged our light conveyance out of the township, off the road, into the desert. Two Arabs occupied the corners and spent the morning telling their beads and chattering alternately the one to the other. For us they had nothing but muttered malediction, which we reciprocated. The heavy

rain had, as at Baniou, turned the track into a species of slide upon which neither man nor beast could progress in safety, while we were freely bespattered with mud which came in through the gaps in the tilt. We had had next to nothing to eat and little time to prepare a meal, so we smoked and shivered with cold and hunger, our bones making great play with one another as we jolted along. Suddenly there appeared in the far distance a solitary horseman, riding as if he wished to break his neck. The unpleasant truth dawned upon us that this was some of our business. He had just got sufficiently near for us to recognise a Gladstone bag in his arms which contained all the photographic plates for our journey when the inevitable happened. The horse floundered and fell heavily, the precious parcel coming to earth with a mellow resonance that boded ill for its contents. We laughed by way of relieving our feelings; there was something very funny about the whole transaction, and especially in the expression of the Arab, who had hoped to reach us safe and sound, and to pocket a very substantial bakshish. Still we dealt fairly with him, for it is not every man who can carry a 50 lb. bag before him, bareback and at full gallop, over a surface as slippery as ice. A passing nomad hauled up a jackal for sale, which we refused, for a jackal is not a handy piece of luggage on a long journey, and we had neither the heart to kill the beast nor the wherewithal to preserve its skin when killed.

Presently our late friend, the shêkh of Ain el Hadjar, rode past. We greeted him with a smile, which we did our best to prevent from being derisive, he us with a sickly grin, and that, we thanked Providence, was the last we were to see of him.

The track became steadily worse. Several watercourses, where the streams ran deep and strong, we passed safely

enough, but a long rise with no better footing than buttery mud and scattered thorn bushes brought the team to a stand, far from the nearest point at which it was possible to procure more horses. "Ah malheureux ! Ah cochons malades ! Espèces de . . ." and much more of a like nature, did our driver address to the ears of the shivering animals. It was to no purpose. We got out and played with the spokes of the wheels, as if we were running up a gun, but the two Arabs inside sat still, content with their Kismet, and we did not know whether French law permitted us, in the circumstances, to assault them or not ; moreover, we hoped in due time to arrive at Biskra, and were reluctant to take with us too magnificent a sample of the mud of the High Plateaux. Thus it befell that, after a fine selection of Queensland "bullocky" talk had only moved the conveyance another hundred yards, we decided to walk ahead to a "canteen" which was reported in our road. Here we were lucky enough to find a number of Italian navvies doing, as usual, the hard work which required more muscle and brains than an Arab possesses. It was a dreary little shanty, wind swept, bare, dirty, but stocked with provisions, and we ate a huge meal of bread, eggs, onions, cheese, and dried figs, and tried, with indifferent success, to swallow a more atrocious magenta wine than had yet assailed our throats. A new team and a spare horse bore us presently from the canteen on to that portion of the road which had been already made. Now it was all plain sailing ; but the country got bolder, the mountains closed in upon us, snow-capped at their summits, and sprinkled all over with clumps of juniper and halfa grass ; the hills became steeper and longer. Ain Touta was reached at last—forty kilometres in seven hours, the greater part of the road being "made"—this was indeed travelling. Our train was already in

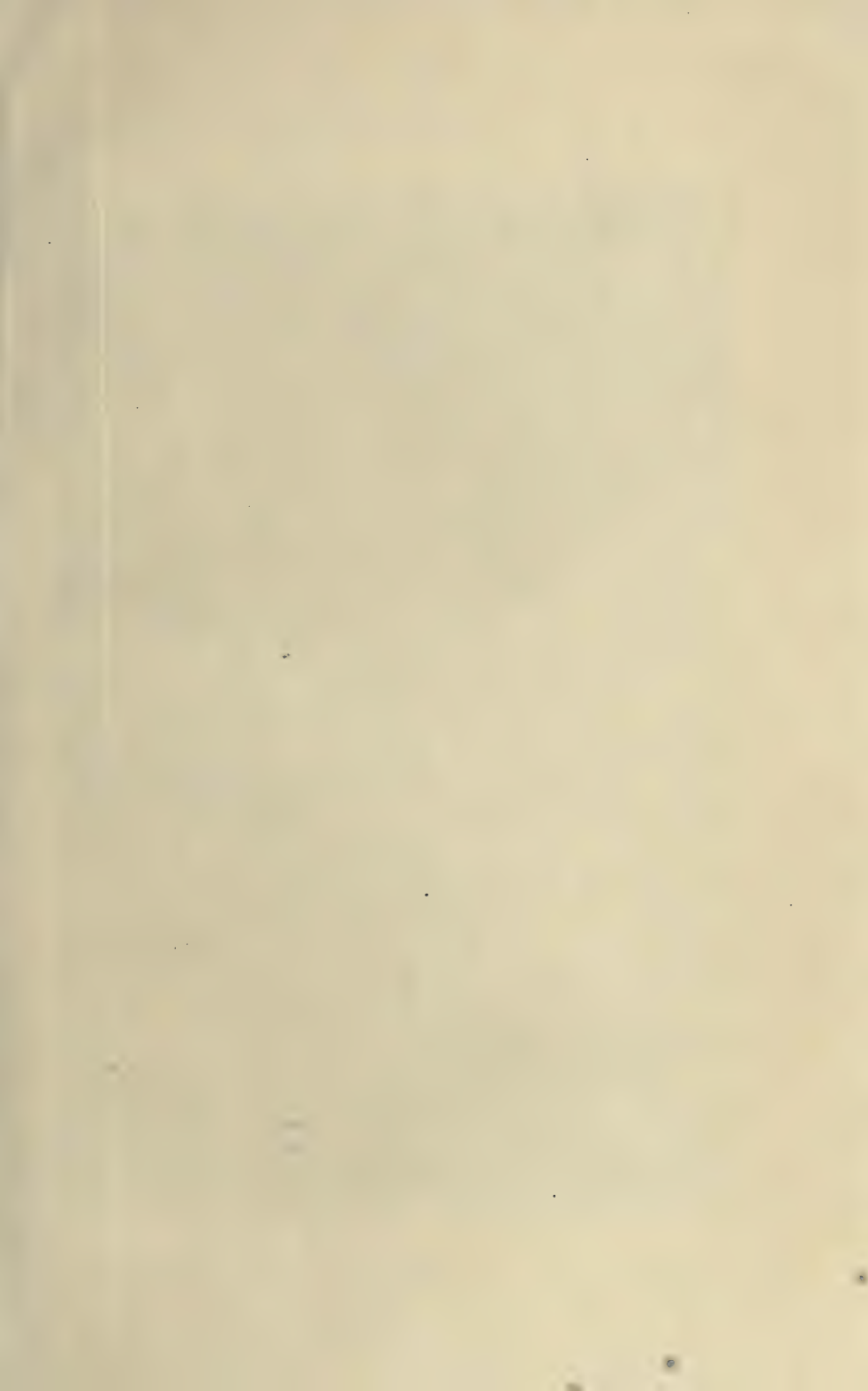
the station, and our sudden irruption into a first-class carriage, to say nothing of cameras, blankets, sacks, and mud—mud over all—must have tried to the uttermost the politeness of a French gentleman in one corner and a top hat. Two appalling ruffians were, not many hours afterwards, set down at the Royal Hotel, Biskra, where, fortunately, long experience of moufflon hunters and other mad Englishmen has made the staff more or less indifferent to the condition in which a guest arrives. It was a sudden transition, in a few hours, from a mud hovel to a palace, from cold and rain to an enormous *bain de siège*.

The railway from Constantine to Biskra, descending as it does from the region of the Plateaux to that of the Sahara, is a fine piece of engineering. The permanent way looks and feels solid and well laid, and the bridges over which it passes are not only strong but often elegant. It is, perhaps, by this route that France will one day unite the Soudan with the Mediterranean. So far the line has got no further south than Biskra, but the engineering difficulties after that point is reached can hardly be greater than those presented by the gorges and mountains about El Kantara. The Sahara as seen from near Biskra is by no means desert in the ordinary sense of the term. It is not bare and sandy, but rocky, scrub-covered to a large extent, and intersected by numerous watercourses under which flow streams of water at a greater or lesser depth. Artesian borings have already enlarged several oases near Biskra, and it is by no means impossible that the whole country may some day come, if not under cultivation, at least under pasturage for sheep and cattle. At present camels and goats thrive fairly well in small herds, and, if the Government cared to spend the money, there is no reason why the line should not be extended to Touggourt, whither there is already a tolerable track.

Shifting sand-banks could be more easily controlled than the heavy snow-drifts which not long since blocked the line between Constantine and the west.

Ain Touta and Les Tamarins were typical settlements in this part of the country. Snugly ensconced in a fair valley, with a sparkling stream running in cascades between the mountains, they should be pleasant places to live in, summer and winter alike. The snow that hung two thousand feet higher only reached them as fertilising rain—at least in the springtime. Groves of eucalyptus thrive about the railway stations and farmhouses. The inevitable poplar must help the colonist to think himself at home. To men of our race it seems absurd that there should be the shadow of a doubt about the possibility of European civilisation, of the practicability of rearing healthy families even so far south as Biskra. The Anglo-Saxons of Texas and California, of the Australian bush, even the “braves Boers” themselves, would find themselves here under conditions even more favourable than those of their own homes. Yet Frenchmen with whom I have talked on the subject are not all satisfied that their compatriots can possess this land save as conquerors and administrators. It would seem that the practicability of Algeria for white men was sufficiently demonstrated by the fact that the white—even blond—Kabyles and Chawia have lived there for countless generations. Thousands of years ago the Egyptians painted them blue-eyed and fair-haired upon their monuments, and yet the swarthy “Kelt,” whose ancestors have inhabited the Mediterranean basin for untold ages, doubts his ability to face the climate of this portion of it even for a few years.

It is not fever, nor yet sun, nor even privation that has kept the colonists at home in France, that has filled Oran with Spaniards, Tunis with Maltese, that has made it year





EL KANTARA FROM THE NORTH.

by year more impossible for our neighbours to possess Algeria for themselves, founding a new France of forty million souls inhabited by Frenchmen. It is rather the sickness of home, of the café, of the boulevard ; more than all, it is the curse of small families and certain incomes that is responsible. In Algeria a new Latin nation may be born, but it will be Spanish, Italian, Maltese, rather than French.

The geological structure of the country between Ain Touta and Biskra, and especially at El Kantara, is rather remarkable. As has been already said, the strata at Bou Saada dip towards the Sahara, but at no great angle from the horizontal. As the train passes down the gorges to the south from Les Tamarins this dip becomes more and more pronounced, until at El Kantara the stratification is nearly vertical and towards Biskra the rocks have all the appearance in places of having been almost completely overturned. At El Kantara are beds of fossil oysters, but the whole district, bounded on the one side by the towering masses of the Aurès mountains, and on the other by the dreary plateaux of the salt pans, would reward further investigation by geologists.

At El Kantara is an excellent little hotel with a huge cypress and a blue gum at the door. The village is very small, but contains a school, whose pupils I photographed as they wended their way up the rocky side of the hill. El Kantara means in Arabic "The Bridge," for there is a Roman bridge across the gorge—no longer recognisable as such to be sure (it has been "restored"), but still a Roman bridge, and a silent testimony to the greatness of the Empire.

Few sights are more impressive than the ruins of Roman work on the very confines of the ancient territories. The Roman Wall in England, the Temples of Baalbec, even

El Kantara compare not unfavourably with the ruins of the Eternal City herself. The completeness and solidity of Roman civilisation are almost unparalleled. The Briton, the Syrian, and the Berber were all trained in the same school, and whether one stands facing the dreary mist-swept North, the vague, inhospitable East, or the sandy, sunburnt South, it flashes upon the mind that Rome had



SCHOOL CHILDREN AT EL KANTARA.

assimilated according to her lights, all that was worth assimilating in the ancient world.

Of the view from El Kantara many more facile pens than mine have written. Hundreds of English tourists pass yearly through this "Golden Gate of the Sahara" in search of health or sport or amusement. Not many, perhaps, break their journey there, but to all the orthodox descriptions are familiar. Yet as we saw El Kantara the scene was perhaps unusually typical of the meeting of North and South. Behind a grey pall of cloud streamed

rain and snow upon veiled mountains ; at the gorge itself a stray beam of sunlight gilded the pinnacles and towers of rock. Full in front, through the rift, glowed the ruddy Sahara in the glory of an African afternoon. From grey-green scrub and darkling barren mountain, from red-tiled farm and homestead, the eye ranged to stately groves of palms and golden sand, to clusters of mud-built villages. Forests of blossoming apricot and fig and prickly pear sent outposts northward through the gorge, and they, it seemed, reporting ill of that which lay beyond, strayed no further, but held their own sullenly by the riverside. Algeria is but Europe. The Sahara is Africa.

At the hotel was a dachshund for hunting moufflon—surely not for gazelle as we were told. Whether or not there are moufflon in sufficient numbers to attract the sportsman, I cannot say. Anyhow, El Kantara possesses in itself sufficient beauties for the artist of the brush or of the pen, as the pictures in the hotel testify.

Down in the “ Arab ” villages among the date-palms were men and boys washing clothes in the foaming stream. They trod the washing on the rocks, soaped it, trod upon it again, spreading and trampling each piece until it was clean. In this way also the Berber women of the Aurès treat their garments, and indeed the Berber element at El Kantara and Biskra is considerable. Blue eyes and white skins are not the products of Arabia, nor do the true daughters of the Prophet gaze unveiled upon the casual unbeliever. It was possible in these villages to glance into many an interior, to see the women weaving burnouses, the children playing round the door unmindful or forgetful of the evil eye. Strangers are no rarity at El Kantara, nor are they in Cairo, but this indifference to the presence of the foreigner is certainly not found among the inmates of the Cairene harem, from which it seems not improbable that the

Chawia Berbers have impressed upon their Arab neighbours not only the fairness of their features, but also the almost European freedom which they themselves allow to their women.

Among the rocks at the top of the cliff M—— found some common English wild flowers—the last trace of Europe—and picked them as the sleet fell, covering the mountains for miles with a powdering of shallow snow.

Biskra was to us a great disappointment. It is like Cairo in the season—full of big hotels, tourists, and more or less corrupted (if it were possible) Arabs, who assail the visitor with a mixture of French and English, the proportions being varied according to his supposed nationality. Trams and cabs, arcaded shops, gardens, date-palms—it is all Cairo, only Cairo on a very small, cold, and unattractive scale. The negro village contains amongst the Arabs some negroes, but they are no more representative of their Soudanese sires than a coloured “American citizen” resembles the West Coast savage from whom he sprang.

To those, however, who have been associated with Arabs, whether in Egypt or Algeria, for any length of time, the sight of a black face is very welcome. Its beaming, child-like good-nature, its honest stupidity, are generally sufficient guarantee that their owner is a man to be trusted instead of watched, a man who will not forget a kindness nor yet bear malice over long. Most travellers in the East find sooner or later that the Arab, at least the settled Arab, is an incorrigible thief and rascal, often without even a smiling countenance, while the despised nigger is not only a better man in a fight, but a far more reliable servant and follower in time of peace.

There were plenty of roses and geraniums at Biskra, but where, we inquired of our companions, was the Saharan sun? With one accord they assured us that they

had scarcely seen him yet, and had not felt him at all, but the Saharan rain they had both seen and felt for the space of a week or more. The hotel porter sagely remarked that he had never known such an exceptional season, and predicted each day the end of the rains and the return of warm weather. We wished him luck with his prophecy, for the snow-capped Aurès in the distance were to be our fate in the near future.



A STREET IN THE ARAB TOWN—BISKRA.

After a long and unsuccessful hunt for the neolithic monuments which every Arab had heard of but could not find, we abandoned a search which had only produced one roughly-chipped flint—the legacy of prehistoric man. The roads around Biskra are for the most part execrable, strewn with boulders and furrowed by numerous water-courses in which grow long reedy grass and dwarf scrub—the refuge of camels and goats.

The Arab town, destroyed a century ago by a flood, is

built of mud ; the houses are generally of two storeys with flat roofs. Runnels of water course down the narrow streets between and irrigate vast fields of corn and groves of palms. The walls are pierced by numerous wedge-shaped holes arranged like a rose-window—a very common sight in the Chawia villages to the north—and by massive wooden doors secured by correspondingly heavy bolts and bars. In all directions palm-tree pipes project from the roofs, ready to pour a flood of water on the head of the passer-by.

The usual “guide” nuisance presented itself in the shape of a boy who refused to take our hints that nothing was to be gained by his staying with us. Fortunately a rival appeared on the scene, and after a lively interchange of compliments the boys started fighting, leaving us to our own devices. The smaller being vanquished, fled from our ken, and we thereupon beat the other for his brutality and were quit of them both.

Already the figs were beginning to colour ; tamarisks and cacti closed every garden to the eye of the curious. But the grounds of the Château Landon are by far the most striking thing in Biskra, and show what energy and intelligence, backed by capital, could and can do in the Sahara. The Count’s mansion and its outlying saloons are in themselves worth a visit, but the gardens are exquisite and worth the journey to Biskra. In the first place every kind of Algerian tree and shrub and flower which can stand a moderate heat is there, lining walks smooth and hard and white of the stamped and rolled mud of the oasis. Not a dead leaf is to be seen, scarcely a speck of dust. Masses of bougainvillea, purple and scarlet, climbed over a little pavilion in the centre of the garden, producing an effect more bizarre and theatrical than one could have wished. Winding alleys dived

beneath masses of tropical vegetation out of whose cool shades came the merry tinkle and splash of running streams. Hedges of geraniums and cacti recalled Southern Europe. Groves of New Guinea hibiscus showered their red blossoms at our feet; orange- and lemon-trees filled the air with delightful odours of the south of Spain. Cingalese bamboo thickets, interwoven with a thick undergrowth of fan-palms and overtopped by date and even coconut-trees, bordered patches of Javanese paddy and Alpine barley and wheat. South Sea bananas, Syrian figs, golden Queensland pawpaws (mamie apples) grew in profusion everywhere. Surely a more wonderful mixture of flora is scarcely to be found in any other single spot. Even the gardens of Buitenzorg, centre though it be of an earthly paradise, cannot show the grains of the grey north close hedged by the lustrous fruits of the tropics.

At Biskra is a building now occupied by "the Daughters of God," as the Arabic inscription over it declares, formerly destined by Cardinal Lavigerie for the headquarters of the militant missionaries who were to convert the Arabs to Christianity—if not by the power of the sword at least by the respect which its possession inspires. It was a magnificent idea, albeit old-fashioned; such conversions are regarded nowadays as impossible or useless when possible, but we forget that after this fashion did Charlemagne and Alfred and a host of other great and good men effect the Christianising of our own forefathers. Mohammedanism itself was spread in a similar manner, though there were and are many peaceful Muslim missionaries whom it suits us to forget just as we forget the aggressive Christianity of early and mediæval Europe. The cardinal did not carry out his great scheme; but his statue stands at Biskra to recall to the memory of posterity one of the founders and benefactors of the country.

We laid in a store of billy-cans, tinned meat, chocolate and tea, for the Aurès mountains were supposed to be somewhat destitute of creature comforts ; still, with plenty of blankets and the occasional hospitality of a kaid or shêkh, we did not anticipate greater difficulties than we actually encountered. Everything depended on the weather, and we left for Batna full of gloomy forebodings.

CHAPTER IV

BATNA TO EL ARBAA

Batna—Lambessa—Penal Settlement—Roman Remains—A Cordial Administrator—"Cavaliers"—Above the Snow-line—The Sun—Cedar Forest—Ruins of a Roman Station—Cattle and Mules—The Pine Forest—First View of El Arbaa—Our Quarters—The Village: its Houses, Crops, and Inhabitants—Future of the Chawia—The "Café"—Chawia Women—Domestic Details—Sheep, Goats, Chickens, and Dogs of the Chawia—The Letter of the Law.

BATNA is a large and fairly typical Franco-Algerian town. It is surrounded by loopholed walls and contains a large garrison of troops—for not twenty miles away are the seats of the Chawia mountaineers—tribes which are supposed to be ready for revolt at the first favourable opportunity. The town is situated in a wide plain surrounded by mountains four or five thousand feet high, and being itself at nearly half that altitude, the winters are somewhat severe. Halfa grass abounds on the fells, whose brown contours, unrelieved by any marked features save the white snow at the summit and occasional patches of cedar forest, left upon us much the same impression as that produced by the wilder districts of the Highlands of Scotland. Beneath the moorlands, if one may so term them, wide areas of cultivated land struggled to grow green beneath an inky canopy of clouds out of which

ever and anon issued torrential rains, sleet, and piercing winds which froze the marrow in the bones. True, the temperature was forty-four or thereabouts, but whether it was that we had expected something warmer, or because we had not yet become acclimatised, we found the cold as bad as anything England can produce, not in April, but in January. In the houses are huge fireplaces, but as is usually the case where the summer is warm, as in Southern Europe, the natives seem loth to make use of them. The streets are wide and planted with rows of young plane-trees, but the houses are mostly of only one storey, red-tiled, whitewashed, badly ventilated, and of a generally mean outward appearance not altogether belied by the interiors we saw. Many of them are in the possession of Arabs, Chawia, and remnants of the old Turkish soldiery, and from such tenants one expects little in the nature of comfort or cleanliness.

There is a good church in the centre of the town, and on its tower—opposite our window—a pair of storks were building a nest, sacred birds here as elsewhere to all the Continental peoples.

Lambèse, or Lambessa, only a few miles away, occupies the site of an important Roman military station. It is reached in an hour by the diligences or waggonettes, two or three of which run each way every day. The road is good and is bordered in parts by avenues of trees which at the time of our first visit had not the least suspicion of a bud or a green leaf upon them. The country seems well watered but indifferently cultivated, and quite insufficiently protected from the inevitable flocks of sheep and goats that provide the local Arab with a miserable livelihood. At Lambessa are two inns—one-storeyed like nearly all the private houses in the village—at one of which we were fairly comfortable. Anyhow, the good

lady of the house did her best for us in the matter of cooking, and if the place in which we ate was occasionally invaded by goats, pigs, and dogs, these at least were tangible nuisances which could be readily seen and ejected. Of the other kind of nuisances we found no trace. Lambessa is actually more exposed to any possible incursion by the Chawia than is Batna. It is, nevertheless, destitute of any better means of defence than the presence in barracks of a disciplinary company and warders. We saw a number of these worthies, the "hard cases" of the French army, splitting logs under the supervision of an armed guard. Some Zouaves were drilling and a military band was playing a weird sort of funeral march in the distance; the general impression was one of sadness and desolation. Lambessa did not look happy. I have seen no town in Algeria which did. Here is the seat of government of the "mixed commune" of the Aurès and we called forthwith on Monsieur Arribé, the Administrator. We found him in comfortable, unpretentious quarters surrounded by a body of "cavaliers" (of whom more anon) with a good fire burning in his office. We announced our plans. M. Arribé was not only courteous and polite, he was kindness itself; produced all manner of interesting photographs, books, and pamphlets concerning the district in which he seems to take a great deal of interest and a justifiable pride, and showed us a well-preserved Roman mosaic in the adjoining courtyard, to protect which he has built a shed of ample proportions. So cordial was our reception that we were not sorry to hear we should have to pay him a second visit, an authorisation from the Sub-Prefect at Batna being required for our expedition to the Aurès.

The little township is full of Roman remains. In the main street are many monuments—mostly funebral and of

indifferent execution—built into the walls and gates of the houses. The wife of a Colonist was washing clothes, and horses and mules were being watered at a group of Roman sarcophagi which made excellent troughs to catch the little mountain stream that came babbling down the roadside. Among the vineyards—we were almost at the limit of vines, Lambessa being some 3,500 feet above sea level and buried under deep snow all the winter, while even



THE PRÆTORIUM—LAMBESSA.

the summers are cool—were numerous Roman walls and fragments of masonry. The Prætorium has lost its roof, but is otherwise little injured by the lapse of centuries. For a late Roman building it is by no means contemptible. Inside it are displayed many statues and fragments of statues, which are as well protected as their execution deserves.

Close by are the remains of extensive baths, and one of the gates of the city is on the neighbouring slope. The

amphitheatre still retains its general form and two arches. It was built like so many amphitheatres in the provinces—of earth covered with masonry, the whole structure being neither better nor worse than that near Compiègne—for example—and much superior to that of Silchester. The paving of the street that led to the Prætorium was in fair preservation, but of the gates nothing much need be said, save that they were not in the best style of Roman architecture. I spent an hour or more trying to photograph an Arab with his flocks on the Roman causeway, with the Prætorium as a background, but all to no purpose: he was evidently alarmed at the sight of the evil eye of the camera, and at the close of the operations I do not know which of us was the more exasperated.

There are quite a number of hares near Lambessa, and two dachshunds at the inn were kept to hunt them—with what success we were not informed. I have seen dachshunds coursing hares on our own South Downs, and if any one enjoys a seat on a breezy hilltop, a bloodless but exciting chase, and a good laugh, this is a form of sport I would commend to his notice.

The Sub-Prefect at Batna was anxious to do anything he could for us, gave us the desired authorisation, and wished us better weather. We again presented ourselves to M. Arribe, who told off a "cavalier"—a Chawia named Tahr or Tahar—to accompany us next day, to act as escort, guard, servant, dragoman, interpreter, and in any other capacity for which he was, or was not, qualified. For all these services we could reward him as we liked at the end of the trip, the amount to vary according to the satisfaction given. At the close of our expedition to the Aurès we could truthfully declare ourselves delighted with the system and the men employed; indeed without a cavalier we could have accomplished little or nothing

without far more money and time than we had at our command.

A cavalier wears the ordinary native dress—a smock, one or more hand-woven woollen burnouses, according to the state of the weather, and in addition over all a handsome sky-blue burnous faced with white or yellow. With a turban twined about with a camel's-hair cord on his head, a pair of red leather boots reaching to the knee, a revolver in his holster, and superbly mounted on a prancing Arab charger, a cavalier forms an ideal companion in a picturesque country. Generally speaking he is as useful as he is beautiful.

Our first introduction to the practical working of the cavalier system was an agreeable surprise. We had ordered mules to be ready—three of them—at daybreak, but never expected that they would be there at the appointed hour or that we should escape a dispute in the rain over the terms of hire, with the usual unpleasantnesses of jostling, swearing, perjury, and attempts to defraud by the mule owners. Instead, what was our surprise to find—firstly, a magnificent sunrise without a cloud in the sky; secondly, an orderly array of five animals from which we were to pick three which we could have as long as we wished for three francs a day each. That was the tariff, and no more could be charged so long as the representative of the Government was with us.

After our Bou Saada experience we felt ourselves in paradise, and this first agreeable impression of travel in the Aurès mountains was never effaced nor even marred by the slightest unfortunate incident from start to finish.

Our spirits rose as we ascended the mountain-path at a dignified gait, the sumpter mule gave us no trouble—true he had little but billy-cans, tins, ten kilos of bread, blankets, and cameras to carry—and our guide, philosopher, and

friend, Tahr, raised our expectations of a good time to the highest pitch by expatiating in very broken French on the beauties of the mountains and the virtues of their inhabitants.

Above all, the sun shone out undimmed by clouds, and the keen, pure air of the high lands acted like a charm, dispelling all care or thought for the morrow, and rendering the minor inconvenience of being without saddles or stirrups a matter for laughter rather than anguish.

Little by little the traces of last night's hoar-frost gave place to patches of snow. The low scrub of juniper and brambles was succeeded by the primeval forest of holm oak. As the sun gained strength the snow began to disappear in countless little rivulets that turned the steep path into a quagmire before they united and poured in flashing cascades from rock to rock, from one marshy hollow to the next, deep down into the valley beneath. There below us lay Lambessa like a toy village, the Prætorium with long rows of sombre cypress standing boldly out from the rest. Beyond were more white-capped mountains glowing redly in the sunshine, their feet bathed in the green sea of the young corn crop. Algeria was once one of the granaries of the world, and is still a land with infinite agricultural possibilities.

At the summit of the pass our mules were knee deep in snow and slush. A lovely tarn, shining like a mirror of burnished silver, lay before us ; around it snow : behind, snow mountains range after range, their crests casting deep purple shadows from against the sun, backed by the unsullied blue of heaven, in which the larks were singing their praises of the spring. Between the gaps in the ilex forest another and another valley gaped beneath our feet—valleys with winding threads of silver and clothed in dark woods, impenetrable, mysterious. To us

the scene was one of surpassing loveliness. We had not seen a forest for months ; even trees had been welcomed as rarities. Snow we had not seen close at hand perhaps for a year or more : from the dreary plateaux, from the cold and arid rocks of El Kantara and Biskra we seemed suddenly transported to a seventh heaven of sun and verdure, of silver and azure and crystal. The mules caught something of the strange inebriation of the mountains, and



THE HEAD OF THE PASS.

we were quickly recalled—not to earth indeed—but to our sober senses as we galloped jauntily across the downs towards the head of a gully. Down the sides of this we proceeded slowly and cautiously ; as usual the horse required leading and direction at every other step—Tahr was fated to pay dearly in shoe leather for the vanity that scorned a more sure-footed mount. Down the bed of a rushing stream, past many a forest, sometimes fording, sometimes crossing gingerly on stepping-stones, we reached the valley, off-saddled, or rather off-sacked, the

mules, and made a hearty meal washed down with the snow-water from the stream. It was foolish but irresistible—we had seen no such streams for weeks and weeks.

Thereafter we slept, and the Chawia muleteers discoursed about our outward appearance and inward thoughts—not angrily and covetously like Arabs, but calmly and with self-restraint like the noble half-savages most of them are.

As the afternoon wore on the country became park-like—clumps of ilex were dotted about beside the river—the snow gleaming from afar off over their sombre tops. Giant carcasses of trees strewed the ground, young saplings stood ready to assume their places. All these trees resembled hollies rather than the evergreen oak of England. Their leaves are prickly and deeply indented, and the nearer the ground they are the more pronounced is this peculiarity. Its reason was not far to seek. A few drowsy Chawia shepherd boys lay in the shadow of the forest, now and again filling the woodland with the mellow notes of their flutes; no tune, no time; but it was nature's own music, and anything more highly wrought would have been out of harmony with its surroundings. Near by grazed flocks of sheep and goats, the descendants of who knows how many thousand generations. Out of respect to these and to their forbears had the holm-oaks donned a prickly foliage—unpalatable even to the hardened leaders of the herd.

In one shady elbow of a stream were men and lads washing their burnouses. As we crossed the drift we met a family on the march—the women walking unveiled behind the mules upon which the father and his youngest offspring were seated. Instead of sour looks we had a cheery "*Bon jour aleikum*," but I am afraid it was the silver ornaments, gorgeous apparel, and bright eyes of the women that attracted our attention more than the

civility of their lord. There was no doubt about it. These Chawia women were white—as white as any of us—and not the marbly white which turns to yellow in the sun, so common among southern Europeans who live indoors—but a fairness modified by rosy cheeks and healthy sunburn. The men are often so deeply tanned by exposure to the glow of the snow in winter, to the glare of the dry uplands in summer, that it is a little hard to recognise them as men of a like colour with ourselves. Moreover, when one does chance to see an upper arm or the skin of the head beneath the turban, an unwashed child- and man-hood have too often nearly obliterated the original fairness of the skin.

In a glen beneath the first outposts of the cedar forests lay square stones this way and that without plan or order. This was all that time had left of some Roman station pushed far into the mountains to overawe the ancestors of those who now quarried the remains for their houses. The Roman occupation of this part of the Aurès can never have been much more than nominal. In other places it is perhaps otherwise. Roman coins and lamps were sometimes brought to us for sale, but both were of the commonest type, the former always copper and the latter often of native clay, such as a rude soldiery would have acquired with ease and lost without regret.

In the midst of the cedar forest is the solitary home of the forester—a two-storied European house with green shutters and a loopholed courtyard—all of good dressed stone. We met the man himself, evidently an old soldier, probably a veteran of '70, condemned by choice or duty to this lonesome life. Still if the trees are his charge—"his children" he would probably call them—his existence is not without pleasure, certainly not without the mitigation of beauty. From the highest summit of the forest a magnificent panorama unveiled itself. In the foreground the

waving feathery tops and gaunt out-stretching arms of ancient giants—below, the ilex regaining possession of the mountain-side wherever the fierce, hot blast from the distant Sahara made life intolerable for the cedars. In the dim background rose peaks casting long shadows of



IN THE CEDAR-FOREST.

the afternoon towards the vague white shimmering of the plateaux and the salt pans. The desert itself bounded the horizon 4,000 feet below us. It was another world upon which we looked—a world we would by no means have exchanged for that in which we were.

By and by the forest ceased and we came down a long valley full of coarse herbage half swamp, half river, for the melting snows of the mountains had swelled every stream to the point of overflowing. Flocks and herds of stunted cattle were listlessly consuming the sodden grass. These cattle, much the colour and build of our Alderneys, were scarcely larger than a six months' calf in England—albeit full-grown. Whether they were ever larger and have been dwarfed by in-breeding or by the scarcity of food and water in the Aurasian summers and winters is a matter for conjecture; but the analogies of the Highland cattle and of the Kerry breed may be more than suggestive.

The baggage mule had dropped further and further behind, and so we waited, not unwillingly, and stretched our legs beside the stream into which our animals rushed with one accord. Tahr said he knew of no harm in drinking snow-water for man and beast, so we watched with interest the antics of our mounts, which we had taken the precaution to fasten together by the bridles. Horses, so tethered, would have spent the precious moments in trying to thwart one another. Not so mules. They trotted as it were hand and hand to the brook; every motion was carried unanimously. I believe they would, had they been so minded, have made quite a respectable pace even through forest country, so well did they seem to understand the necessities imposed by a connecting link.

Beyond this valley lay the region of Aleppo pines. The mountains opened out into great waves covered to their very tops with forest. The strata tilted at a steep angle downwards to the south and west, left the northern and eastern faces almost precipitous. The crests were like so many hogs' backs, the track itself going straight up





DISTANT VIEW OF EL ARBAA.

the exact centre, where a layer of stone had been washed away by the action of the rains. One mountain in the distance resembled a lion lying down. A thousand feet below his head, between the paws, was El Arbaa, whither we were bound.

Not until we had passed down and up and down and up again over two crests, across an intervening cañon, where the stream roared hoarsely in its narrow channel, did we see the village, hundreds of feet below, in the deep shadow of the Lion's peak. The last rays of the sun glancing over the edge of the precipice tinged the rocks and pines with mellow gold. All the mountain opposite glowed in the waning light. At its foot foamed a torrent. Between earth and heaven El Arbaa hung high on the cliff side, house above house, tier above tier of swallows' nests clinging to the shadow. Beyond were more mountains, jagged and purple.

Though a good hour of halting and stumbling, of precipices and rolling boulders, divided us from it, yet we saw clearly through the transparent blueness of the evening the grey smoke-wreaths wander from the flat roofs up the wall of rock behind, the people, now hurrying to and fro like ants upon their housetops, now slowly driving in the herds up zigzag paths that seemed too narrow, too steep, in the perspective for even an ant to climb. I have never seen any situation at once so grand and so beautiful. Perhaps El Arbaa has something in common in this respect with those strange cliff Pueblo villages of America, where also an ancient stage of culture, a forgotten race, prolongs existence in the heart of an unromantic modern world.

Tahr himself was moved at the sight of El Arbaa. He exclaimed, "*Il hamdu lillah!*" with all the conviction and piety begotten of an empty stomach that sees itself shortly

replete with couscous. The good things of the Chawia gardens, the fresh milk of their flocks were not absent just then from any of our minds, but it was not till long after sunset that the venerable grey-headed kaid and his attendant ministers escorted us up the tortuous lanes of the village, the cynosure of a hundred curious but not impertinent, Chawia eyes, to the guest-chamber, wherein he had spread his most costly carpet for our reception. The mules were stabled immediately beneath. Our one window, no larger than the port of a cabin, looked out apparently into space, but by craning the head we could see the flat top of a house cutting the snake-like course of the stream in the valley far away below.

A photograph taken on the way had led to the temporary escape of our mules into the bush, and the last of our mid-day store of bodily fuel had been consumed in their recapture. It was, therefore, with feelings of thankfulness that we saw the dry thorn bushes burst into flame and pour a volume of smoke up the capacious chimney-corner towards a hole in the roof. The hotch-potch that presently sang upon the fire was a thing to be remembered, nor were the kaid's couscous, dates, and nuts to be despised. His coffee was excellent, but not more excellent than the well-stewed tea with which we regaled him and such of his family as cared to partake of it. Women, children, and dogs came and gazed their fill at us, without impudence or vulgar curiosity, but with that strange, dignified, yet deferential look of inquiry which genuine savages often display on such occasions.

In a corner was a wooden frame supporting layers of skins and mats. More mats and the carpet covered the hard, beaten floor. We tossed for the doubtful pleasure of occupying that frame, and, my luck being in, M—— settled down to a night of fruitless struggle against innumerable but invisible foes.

Of these nocturnal (and, for the matter of that, diurnal) visitors I shall say no more than this, that we found them nearly everywhere in the Chawia houses, and that after a fortnight we became more or less immune to their attacks. We saw no mosquitoes in the Aurès valleys, though, doubtless, later in the year they are numerous.

Day after day of almost unclouded sunshine lay before us. The spring had come at last with warm days and



HERDS LEAVING EL ARBAA IN THE MORNING.

bitter nights. The air is so dry that at sunset the thermometer falls suddenly twenty degrees or more, and it is almost impossible to escape frequent chills unless the utmost precaution is taken. Even so, our work necessitated constant entering and sitting in the cold, gloomy houses; one minute in sweltering sun, the next in what was practically a cave, full of draughts and chilliness. Egypt is not an easy country to keep healthy in for similar reasons. Add the vicissitudes of an Alpine climate to

those of the Egyptian and you will realise that to thoroughly enjoy travel in the Aurès you must be prepared first to undergo a long and trying process of acclimatisation.

Our road had seemed to lie over the housetops. This was not the case. The ledges, rising one above another, on which the village is built are wide enough to leave between the wall of one house and the roof of the next a narrow footway, indistinguishable, save for the tracks of mules and sheep, from the hard mud roof, upon which it would be dangerous for a large animal to walk, and where the stranger, too, must proceed with circumspection to avoid the pitfalls presented by the gaping chimney-holes. Sometimes a broken bowl or jug with the bottom knocked out is utilised as a chimney-pot; oftener there is nothing but an unprotected orifice through which the inmates within hold converse with those without. Everybody sits on his or her roof as much as possible—especially the women, who have no “café” to resort to in an idle moment, and who, from this point of vantage, can gossip and see all that is going on. The roofs have a slight slant this way or that, and often are lower down the middle than at the sides. The rains and melting snows easily run off and fall in cascades on to the footpath just clear of the next house. The footpaths lower down the hill are therefore nothing more nor less than watercourses—dry or full, as the weather may determine.

Throughout the Aurès district the houses are built on the same plan. When a cliff can be found to form the back wall it is utilised as such. If the cliff contains a hole or hollow, so much the better. The walls are made of uncut blocks of stone set in mud instead of mortar, the larger crevices being filled with splinters and smaller fragments, and, in the better houses, the square faces of

the stones are set outwards in such a way as to give a very regular appearance. At intervals of about two or three feet a course of timber serves to keep the wall fairly straight, but as this timber must decay long before the rock, it seems to be also a source of weakness. The beams of which it is composed are laid on short transverse poles, which project on the inside and outside, forming convenient pegs in this case, or in that a source of torn clothes and bruises to the passer-by.

Inside the house are generally stone benches carved from the living rock, or built of odd stones and plastered flat with mud. Heavy columns of juniper wood at intervals of about six feet are planted in the floor. They have, as it were, a capital, like the head of a crutch, placed transversely to the longest diameter of the room. Carried on the crutch-heads are four, five, or six stout trunks in groups—the main joists of the roof. Across these again are laid saplings as close together as possible; the interstices are filled with brushwood and leaves, and a thick coating of mud is stamped down hard upon the top of all. The floors are the bare bed-rock levelled with mud. Sometimes the animals are stabled inside the family room or in a portion of it; sometimes in a separate stall either under, or close to, the main building. The women sweep the roofs in the early morning, and the villagers are not so dirty as might be supposed.

Crossing the stream at the foot of the cliff by a rough bridge made of logs plastered with earth, we ascended by a zigzag path as steep as a staircase, round and over huge loose boulders, to the fields, or rather terraces, which rise one above another on the east side of the valley, just as do the houses on the west. Each terrace, sometimes not more than a few yards wide, is formed by containing walls of rough stones, which wind in and out, following the contours

of the mountain-side. Along the edge of the walls and in the level alluvium in the stream-bed were groves of walnut, apricot, and fig-trees. Oleanders, brambles, and hawthorns choked each other in wild confusion wherever the land was not under fruit trees, wheat, or barley. A few pomegranates completed, for El Arbaa, the list of garden produce.

A view of the village of swallows' nests from the further



SWEEPING THE ROOF.

side revealed about a hundred houses disposed in no regular order. Two or three were so high on the cliff-face that, when inhabited, they could only have been reached by the aid of ladders. In no place were there more than fifteen above one another. A single water-mill marked the end of the village towards the south. It was not difficult to divine the reason for El Arbaa's situation. Less than a day's ride down the valley were the tents of the nomad Arab—now a peaceful thief, formerly an ag-

gressive and bloodthirsty robber. El Arbaa was so built that it could defy a host ; its herds could be driven in and kept for some days on the forage in the village ; its water supply could neither be diverted nor cut off from the village. Only the cultivated terraces would suffer, and such damage is readily repaired. Every house is a little fortress in itself, and the village, to any ordinary marauding band, impregnable.

Still, though the Chawia have never been subjugated by the Arabs, never much infected by Arab blood, for they are an exclusive people and hate the men of the desert more than even the European strangers, they have been repeatedly beaten, forced back from the plains, obliged to grant rights of way to the pastors of the Sahara, even in their last strongholds and fastnesses at the heads of the mountain valleys. They have had imposed upon them the Arabic jargon of the invader, his system of government by hereditary shêkhs—probably like their Berber brothers, the Kabyles, their ancient political system was thoroughly democratic—and, last of all, his religious belief. Had it been otherwise what a field would there be in the Aurès for the student of religion, of superstitions, for the lover of folklore and primitive institutions ! As it is, one scarcely hears the Chawia language spoken. In a few years it will be a dead tongue, save in so far as it is retained for the names of things in everyday use. Even the native Berber words will be Arabicised in form. On the other hand, the peculiar houses and utensils may have a long life. The manufacture of pottery, the weaving of burnouses and carpets will go on as perhaps it went on in the pre-Roman days. Many years must elapse before the influence of French art, already visible in Kabylia, permeates the Aurès, and kills the last homely industries of the people. Protected by the Government from the Arabs, by the

mountains from the not very enterprising colonists, the Chawia will probably be among the last representatives of the prehistoric Mediterranean races to maintain their pristine habits and occupations.

At the so-called "Café Maure" all the idle men of the village are to be found. The café contains a single room, into which one plunges down several stone steps through a low doorway. Within are the usual stone benches, mud



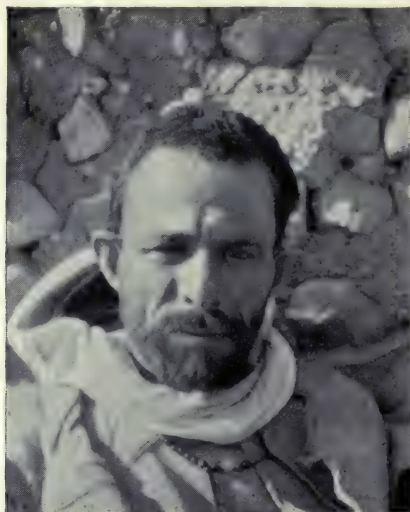
A CHAWIA FIFE-PLAYER.

floor and roof columns polished by many generations of patrons. The coffee is prepared at a niche in the corner terminating in a hole in the roof. The charcoal is blown up by the assistant; the little pots (identical with those in use throughout the East) of brass or other base metal get their three boilings, and, with the addition of enough sugar to make a saturated solution, the coffee is ready. On either side of the chimney-corner hung a fife and a

tambourine. The fife, about two feet long, is made of a kind of reed that grows in the watercourses, and is bound with coloured bands of yellow and blue wool and brass wire. It contains five holes for the fingers. The tambourine is formed of two hoops of wood, of which the outer one confines the edges of a sheep-skin tympanum, across the inside of which are stretched tightly four strings intended to impart a more musical note to the instrument. Into a hole in one side the performer inserts his thumb, beating the tambourine with the flat fingers of his right hand. The music emitted by this primitive fife and drum is not very striking. There is nothing in the tune to lay hold of. Its discords are hopelessly elusive. As for the tambourine, its rhythm, more or less independent of the other instrument, conforms to the common Arab combination of one long followed by three short and then two other long beats. The words of the song that accompanies the music are said to be mostly concerned with pastoral subjects. There is no reason to suppose that, if so, they are either more or less fatuous than those of the normal primitive chant; or, indeed, of one, if not more, of its modern descendants.

For the anthropologist the café or its equivalent is always a happy hunting-ground, and, after a good deal of explanation, discussion, and the offer of a small sum of money, we succeeded in getting measurements, photographs, and observations of a number of the men of the village. Fully one-fifth of those we saw at El Arbâa were fair men—that is to say, men who would be counted fair in this country. Blue and grey eyes were even commoner than light (sometimes flaxen) hair. Red moustaches and beards were not more conspicuous in El Arbâa than they would be in London. Of the jet-black hair of the Arab we did not see a single example. Skins were white, or

would have been if they had not been encrusted with the dirt of untold months. The headdress of the men and, even more, that of the women, none of whom of course it was possible for us to measure, has led travellers to speak of the Chawia and Kabyles as a square-headed people, for it does give them that appearance, and we were not a little surprised to find that the squareness is merely an optical illusion encouraged by a considerable breadth of face,



A CHAWIA BERBER OF THE AURÈS.

which is commoner than among ourselves. The women especially seemed to have broader faces, higher cheek-bones and darker hair than the men, but this may be due on the one hand to the absence of whiskers, beard, and moustache, and on the other to the use of black dyes and pigments for the purposes of the toilet.

We felt ourselves at home among so many rosy countenances ; indeed, one youngster would have been taken anywhere but in his own village (where he would be

without honour) for a freckled wee Scotchman. Noses ran all sizes and shapes, just as ours do, but were perhaps on the average somewhat larger.

But enough of anthropology on its physical side. These paragraphs are only for those who care to know what a Berber looks like, and for those who have a pre-conceived notion that he is a black man. I have met plenty of them since my return, and no wonder, for a very large percentage of Britons were until recently quite confident that even Brother Boer, always a much better known character, was a kind of "nigger." And let nobody say of the Berber that he is only "twelve annas to the rupee." I could mention three, if not four, European nations who have less claim, physically and morally, to be reckoned "whitemen."

At sunset the women come up from the stream bearing water in goat-skins, or faggots, or forage, all piled upon their backs. They are dressed, for the most part, in a black or dark-blue gown, gathered in at the waist with a brightly coloured woollen girdle. Some have sandals or shoes (sandals are of grass neatly plaited, and are commonly worn by the men as well); others go barefoot, as do all the children. Sometimes a baby is carried on the back—not on the hip or shoulder, as often elsewhere. A rich woman with an indulgent husband is loaded with coarse silver ornaments, including a gigantic pair of anklets, that weigh nearly a pound, and clank as their mistress walks like the chains on the legs of a ghost. Their headdresses are very various in colour, but are all based on a squarish turban, over which gaudy kerchiefs are arranged with great care and with an excellent eye to effect. Indeed, the Chawia women generally are always, so it seems, more or less in their best. They would never consent to go about like an Arab lady, muffled up to the eyes and resembling

in point of figure a toad walking on its hind legs. Of their social position, I shall have something to say hereafter.

A more leisurely examination of our guest-chamber revealed a number of rough hand-made pots for cooking, for holding water and milk, and so on ; they were all sorts of sizes and shapes, but were not decorated with any clear design—only smeared with a dark-brown varnish, at the composition of which we could not for many weeks arrive. In a corner stood a huge wicker basket the shape of a very portly amphora, but with a flat base. In such receptacles the Chawia store their grain, and in them it is said to keep good for many years. Our host's saddle hung on a peg driven into one of the columns of the roof. It was a fine piece of Arab leather work and elaborately embroidered with brass thread. In all the houses are querns, similar to those still in use in the northern and western islands of Scotland, for grinding corn by hand ; the stone base is nearly always, among the Chawia, a fixture, and built into the floor.

Every night the boys drive in the flocks ; every morning they drive them out again to pasture on the mountains. Of the cattle I have already spoken. The sheep are medium-sized with a good fleece, their faces and heads often tan-coloured. From them is obtained wool for burnouses and carpets, and mutton for couscous. Cattle are very rarely killed for food, and as their milk is seldom seen, and they are not nearly in such large numbers as the goats, most of the cheese and milk is obtained from these black (generally black in the Aurès) and unsavoury creatures, which possess the one merit of being able to grow fat where any other animal would die of starvation—camels not excepted. I have seen them in Norway flourishing on dry fish ; in Spain a bare fallow will keep a

hundred of them ; in Egypt they appear to do well on Nile mud ; in a tin township of North Queensland I have marked them contentedly browsing during the dry season on the paper wrappings of the empty meat cans thrown under the houses, even if (as rumour had it they did not) they refrained from the tins themselves. In the Aurès, however, their lot is cast in pleasant places. Forests of juniper and ilex are accessible, even in the height of the summer, when not a blade of grass is to be seen away from the streams. On the brown scrub-littered mountain-side is the goats' paradise.

The Chawia chicken is of the variety known in some parts of rural England as a "big-bodied bird," that is to say, his feathers are thick enough to hide the extreme length and excessive musculature of his legs. He, too, enters largely into the composition of the couscous, and as he is generally killed an hour or two before sundown, and the couscous does not arrive till an indefinite period after, there is plenty of time in which to let *rigor mortis* make up to him whatever of toughness a life of healthy exercise has failed to produce. As to the eggs of these birds, the Chawia are by no means particular as to the exact stage in which they eat them, and, as everybody knows who has ever worked at zoology, it is a much more agreeable occupation extracting chickens in the laboratory than at the family breakfast-table : thus we were easily persuaded to leave them for our hungry attendants.

Of the dogs it is enough to say that they are only a few degrees removed from dingoes, or jackals, or wolves, or whatever exactly their particular ancestors were. Still they are not so vocal as in the East generally, and are somewhat better cared for than the pariahs that swarm around Arab encampments. They will even submit to be patted by a stranger, and their owners, while regarding

them technically as unclean, do not hesitate to allow their children to caress them or to use them themselves for the chase.

A somewhat more extended acquaintance with our host the Kaid did not leave us so favourably impressed as we had been. He was a sallow-visaged, morose old man, and, it must be added, not a clean old man. He used to come and pray every evening at sunset in our room, first performing those ablutions which, in the desert, the Prophet laid it down, could be done with sand instead of water. Now, although there was a clear pure stream not ten minutes' walk from his house, the Kaid placed by his side a piece of white limestone and thereon rubbing his hands, went through the necessary motions with the powder.

I will say no worse of him in other respects than that he was more like an Arab than any other Berber we met.





EL ARBAA.

CHAPTER V

BOUZINA

Ride from El Arbaa—Position of Bouzina—Social Pit-falls—A Menu—Trade—The Eternal Feminine—Our Purchases—Houses and Streets—An Interior—A Musical Evening—The Kaid in Full Dress—Country Round Bouzina—Cuckoos—Italians—A Veteran of Many Fights—The Mill-stream—The Terraces—Anthropometry and its Results—"Fox"—A New "Cavalier," his Points—The Commercial Spirit—Tattooing amongst the Berbers—The Question of their Former Christianity.

OUR host presently announced that he was sorry, but had business at the village of Bouzina. He would be obliged to leave us to our own devices. He hinted at robbers and a certain scarcity of food in his absence. It was quite clear that El Arbaa had no more use for us and that it was doubtful whether we had any more use for El Arbaa, so, hearing a favourable report of Bouzina from Tahr, we decided to proceed thither with the Kaid.

Again there was no more difficulty whatever with the mules. They were there when we wanted them, and as many as we wanted, though El Arbaa, not being a rich village, does not boast too many in all. Looking back upon the village we had a grand view of the mountains that lay behind; El Arbaa has an inimitable situation, and its air of loneliness only adds to the charm. Our muleteers were two powerful men, one with a bright red moustache

and twinkling blue eyes like the pictures one conjures up in childhood of the Vikings, the other had the features of an Italian peasant from the Campagna—fine aquiline nose, brown eyes, dark hair, and bronzed complexion. A few hundred feet up the stony path on the mountain opposite Bouzina we entered the zone of junipers, a little higher, and dwarf cedars took possession of the rocks. Higher still was what was really the Alp—open land now covered with coarse grass, the resort of all the herds around.

On the left hand the mountains opened out and showed a geological formation not unlike that of the *Portes de Fer*. Great crests and ridges weathered into castellated shapes followed the rolling outline of the fells in ridge upon ridge of stony terraces. Towards the east the slope became almost precipitous and void of vegetation. In the far valley beneath gleamed the white flats of the Bouzina cañon, the village itself we could not yet descry. Our companions talked unceasingly of robbers and thieves; why, we could not understand, for if ever a country was not worth a robber's while to make his permanent or even temporary abode, surely this was that country. Later on we got to know the reason of their remarks, and I may say that the robbers were by no means the men we thought them nor the men of whom they talked.

We descended slowly from the zigzags of the hillside into the plain and from the plain into the cañon, a water-course near fifty feet in depth clean cut by the stream into terraces. Along a terrace ran the road. A sharp turn to the left and Bouzina lay before us. The village is built at the junction of two deep cañons on a pyramidal core of rock, about a hundred and fifty feet high, which stands out almost isolated from the surrounding plain above which its topmost point does not appear. To any one a mile, half a mile, even four hundred yards away, Bouzina

would be invisible. In certain positions not even a suggestion of the wady would have been seen. If El Arbaa was well defended by nature, Bouzina was not only defended by a similar position—in its way almost as picturesque—but moated by the streams as well, and hidden to the eye of every foe. Here, as at El Arbaa, the houses rose one above another according to the nature of the ground, but there were many more of them, and, better than all, the



BOUZINA.

guest-chamber stood isolated on a little platform of rock fifty feet above the stream, whitewashed within and without, a welcome sight to hungry travellers. Just beyond was the house of the kaid and the mosque.

Tahr had, unbeknown to us, but to our great satisfaction, despatched a special messenger to warn the kaid that "Westerners" were coming. We found, accordingly, the room swept and garnished, a single central column supporting an arched roof, which gave the place somewhat

the aspect of a vault or crypt. Unfortunately its temperature went some way to complete this resemblance, still we had nothing but praise for the two four-legged tables, the chairs, the matting on the floor, and especially for the iron bedsteads covered with richly coloured Chawia rugs that adorned the stone divan.

Nor was the Kaid himself a whit behind his room. He, his brother, and various other notabilities came a good way out of the village to meet us—the greatest compliment they could have paid even to visitors of high rank. It is always a little difficult on these occasions for a stranger to know with whom to shake hands. There are usually several servants in waiting who wear practically the same clothes on all ordinary occasions as the big man himself, and with whom he is apparently on terms no less easy and familiar than he is with his own brother. To notice a servant, however, in the presence of the kaid, would be a grave breach of etiquette and one needs sharp eyes and ears to tell who is to be treated with affability and who with grave condescension. In England a similar difficulty has often been alluded to in the pages of *Punch* and elsewhere, but it was amusing to find in far Bouzina the same social pitfalls as in Belgravia. Our new quarters contained a splendid fireplace with a huge heap of fuel beside it. There was also a real chimney, which, however, failed generally to conduct the smoke towards the outer air. In a few minutes the tables were covered with plates, knives and forks—luxuries with which we had dispensed at El Arbaa. A tureen of soup followed; in its wake chickens and couscous. Bottles of wine—unapproachable to our lips by this time—and absinthe made their appearance. Neither form of liquid refreshment being to our taste we remained teetotalers at Bouzina and established thereby half a claim to be true believers. Dessert con-

sisted of oranges, dates, raisins, and walnuts, to say nothing of a dish of peppermint drops. I give all these particulars because on this menu, with the very slightest variations, we subsisted during our stay not only in Bouzina but in the Aurès. An excellent meal it was, twice a day, when we had hardened our hearts to ask the Kaid's wife to be more merciful with the capsicums and pimento.

The only drawback to our comfort was the fact that our host insisted on waiting on us personally and would not touch a mouthful himself until he saw us satisfied. In broken French he would piteously entreat us, "*Mange, mange! Makansh bono?*" (this means in pijin French "not good?"), still, however, regarding with anxiety out of the corner of his eye the fast-disappearing viands. When we realised that two sets of dinners or two sets of suppers were to be made from what was placed before us our condition when hungry was little short of desperate; moreover we were tied absolutely, however much engrossed with work, to be at hand when the regulation meal time arrived.

The good people of Bouzina were not a little excited at our arrival. All the housetops in our vicinity were decked with ladies in gorgeous apparel waiting for a glimpse of the strangers, and, as we occupied, so to speak, the stage, and they the dress-circle and boxes of a natural theatre, we realised that we must act our parts very carefully, and all the more so that there were no blazing footlights round our little platform to dim the brilliance of the bright eyes fixed upon us. The husbands, fathers, and sons came casually in twos and threes to see whether there was any prospect of trade. We assured them there was. What we wanted was anything they had to sell: carpets, rugs, decorated nosebags, earthenware, silver ornaments—anything and everything they liked to

offer at a reasonable price. Now the Berber, Chawia or Kabyle is a born trader. He will tramp for miles to gain a few pence by a bargain. There are Kabyle pedlars scattered all over the country doing everywhere a small but remunerative business in burnouses and silver ware. The men of Bouzina rose to the occasion, and, though they did not at first understand that any pot of local manufacture, however old and greasy and redolent of couscous, possessed in our eyes a possible value, we were afterwards inundated with all sorts and conditions of domestic utensils, from which it was no easy task to make a selection. A continuous stream of small boys and often older men, too, invaded our domain carrying each two or three disreputable brown crocks in the folds of his burnous. Most were to be had for a few coppers, but in nearly all cases the seller had to retire, on hearing our offer, to consult the eternal feminine—evidently the tyrant of his household. If this was the case with the pottery, it was even more true of the numerous silver ornaments that were handed in for our inspection—and left in some instances for days, unclaimed and unsold, for the Chawia have as yet no experience of dishonest Europeans—at least in their own mountains. We would offer a sum of money for each, weighing it against one or more five franc pieces, making our bid proportional entirely to the weight irrespective of workmanship, which, to tell the truth, was in few cases worth 10 per cent. of the silver. The principle, which they readily understood, was this. “Here is a five-franc piece—containing about 3fr. 50c. of pure silver, as you know (probably a liberal estimate). Your bracelet weighs a five-franc piece—take it in your hand and see; the workmanship of the bracelet I set against that of the coin. Are you content with a five-franc piece? Sometimes they were—oftener not—and went off to consult their wives,

who invariably desired to go back on whatever bargain the man had proposed to make. We should have bought many more things at Bouzina, and with more satisfaction to all concerned, had the ladies been a little less grasping. Either they were willing to sell their ornaments or they were not. If not, they should not have sent them for sale after they knew our terms, and to give back an object already bought and paid for we steadfastly refused.

The Kaid's wife—or, to be precise, one of them—had the temerity to invade our apartment and carry off something she had left there. She was evidently determined to be mistress of her own house, but it was obvious from her expression that there would be a storm and that she would not be much the worse for it. Slowly the pottery came in, at first, but at last our collection included all the forms to be seen. It was not in the least like the pottery we had come to get. There was hardly a shape or a pattern—of pattern at all there was next to none—the least like those of the prehistoric pottery of Egypt. It had closer affinities with the early ware of Italy, and we saw and collected—either here or at Mena, I forget which—a solitary specimen fitted with the typical *ansa cornuta* handle.

The belts of wool were objects one would like to have bought in great quantities. They were pretty and useless and would have made excellent presents to friends. Snuff-horns are found in the possession of nearly every Chawia man. Some of them are fairly well decorated with black incised patterns and the owner's name in Arabic characters: they are all made of the two or three last inches of a cow's horn and some are mounted in silver. As to the snuff they contain it is all imported and is not very good. The Kaid himself produced a fine carved powder flask, the property of that "indigent brother" possessed by every

man in this country who is ashamed to trade on his own account. He had no further use for the flask, the French Government having relieved him of his gun a good many years ago, so we bought it, and two more appeared and were also bought in at a cheaper rate because they did not belong to the Kaid.

A report reached us that there were some particularly fine carpets in the village, so we went to see them and found them spread out on the flat roof of a house. Their ground colour was always the same reddish brown—produced they said from the root of a plant known to the women—and in it were woven intricate diamond and chevron patterns with variations, in yellow ochre, green, indigo blue and orange. In a few cases we saw a black dye, but not often; what we most regretted to hear—not at Bouzina, certainly, but at Menaa—was that a certain pigment called in the Arabian tongue “anila” was much better and could be had in brighter colours, than any dye produced in the Aurès. If “anila” comes to be much used, goodbye to the fine native designs and rich, subdued and permanent colouring. Trees and camels entered into the patterns, though, apparently, the tree was originally a date-palm, which is not found nearer than Menaa, and will not bear even there, and the camel is an animal unknown in the Aurès. It is possible after all that the carpet manufacture has been introduced by the Arabs, together with the knowledge of date-palms and camels. The design on the cover of this book is drawn from these carpets, or rather from photographs which we took of them, for we could not come to terms about the price, and the pattern, after all, was what we wanted.

The village itself we reached by crossing the stream over stepping-stones. Immediately in front was a “café.” Bouzina, being a large village, had at least two, and from

this point one began the ascent of the hill by a narrow street as steep as the wall of a house, often covered in and flanked with polished stone divans where the old men sat and gossiped or played a game with date-stones and pebbles on a kind of chess-board. In some cases the



KAID TAHR OF BOUZINA.

track seems to lead through houses which became a right of way when their walls fell down. In all directions are *culs-de-sac* and dark corners, knee-deep in manure, which bring the incautious explorer suddenly against the heels of a mule or cow. Bouzina is not a town to walk about

in unguided, for there is no safeguard against one's arriving suddenly among a family party at their couscous, a lady at her toilet, or indeed, if Tahr spoke truly, a den of thieves. Whether these gentry actually occur in Bouzina or not, I do not know, but Tahr declared that while visiting his relations one evening after dark, an assault was made upon the door with intentions of a burglarious or worse character. He had, of course, left his revolver at home with us, and, whether his facts were accurate or not, had evidently had a very considerable fright. The houses are all of the same kind as at El Arbaa, with one or two exceptions, in which mud bricks take the place of stone. We entered one or two at the invitation of their owners, and after our eyes had grown accustomed to the dark and our noses to the foetid odour of stale couscous and rank mutton fat, of which also every thing, animate and inanimate, brute or human, in the Aurès literally reeks, we observed a loom at which a woman, much amused at our curiosity, sat weaving. She was using no shuttle, but was simply passing the threads individually in and out with her fingers. Two kinds of combs are used for compressing the fabric as woven, but these and the actual frame of the loom were all the artificial aids employed here or in Kabylia, where we studied the whole process. We did not wonder that carpets and burnouses were dear if this was the way they were made. A quern was in one corner, a sort of bed in another—a wooden platform with sheepskins and sacking thrown over it, and large enough to accommodate the whole family. In the dark, at the extreme end, a mule was placidly munching barley. In the centre fowls and dogs disputed, round the embers of the fire, the possession of scraps left from the midday meal. The children were in a disgusting state of filth and neglect, but looked

otherwise far happier than the little Britons who object so strongly to the morning tub, nor were they, to all appearance, ill nourished. We saw the Chawia, it must be remembered, at a time when the spring rains had only just dispersed the winter snows and before the period of spring cleaning—if such an institution exists—had been inaugurated by the advent of warm, dry weather. In the winter life must be very hard for the youngsters. Constantly soaked, with no better means of drying than a mouldering fire whose smoke blackens everything before it finally discovers an exit, and the keen air of the mountains, they die at an early age of affections appropriate to such surroundings, all except the hardiest, who live to be the parents of a new generation. In nature this is as it should be. In an artificial society like our own it is horrible, but it exists, and in worse forms than the Aurès can present. It is a pity that a happy mean cannot be found between rearing children obviously doomed to ill health for life, and allowing all to die who are not, in their first few years of existence, yet quite strong enough to face a winter which, as often happens, is only exceptionally severe. In all the houses in this part of the Aurès is kept a scoop for clearing the roof, which might otherwise collapse beneath the weight of fallen snow. That such an implement should be necessary at all is rather a reflection on the thirty-fifth degree of latitude—even allowing for an elevation of 3,000 feet.

One evening we were invited to witness a dance at the café. The women who were the chief performers did not, however, put in an appearance—perhaps they had gone back on their bargain—and we had to find what solace we could for our disappointment in a drum obligato, a flute solo, and a number of rather monotonous songs. The

room measured about thirty feet by fifteen. Its stone benches were packed with some forty men and boys, and the only source of ventilation—the door—was stopped by a dozen intent listeners. Before long the music and the odour of couscous became tiresome, and after paying our footing by taking some excellent black coffee, we announced our intention of going to bed, somewhat, I am afraid, to the chagrin of our entertainers, who had doubtless advertised us as part of the show.

The Kaid wished to be photographed, so we photographed him and his brother in their gala dress. I do not know the names of all the things he wore, but the general effect was too magnificent for any dull study in black and white to render adequately. Snow-white linen was the basis of the costume. The great man's legs were enclosed in the same red morocco boots as Tahr wore, the feet being further protected by a pair of native shoes. A burnous, fine in texture as silk, and of a soft cream colour, set off a face which was full of dignity and quiet refinement, a face which no Englishman would be ashamed to possess. The *haik* was of a similar silky material and was gorgeously embroidered in green and gold. A clean white turban cloth encircled his head. From his shoulders a gold-laced scarlet burnous hung gracefully like a plaid, one side thrown back to display the whole dress to the best advantage. Only kaid's are allowed to wear these scarlet cloaks, but we were told that there would be no objection to our having and wearing them if we cared to disburse from one to two hundred francs for the garments. We said jocularly that in England we could earn a shilling a day for wearing a red coat and did not see why we should pay so much money for one in Algeria. At this they looked incredulous, but I fancy it still rankles in the Kaid's mind.

The Kaid of El Arbaa did not make a very long stay and presently departed to his own place. We were not very sorry to say goodbye, for however big a "pig," as our "cavalier" called him, it cannot but have been unpleasant to him to see his late guests enjoying hospitality such as his own village cannot or will not afford. We parted good friends with the old man, but never, for our part, forgot the incident of the white stone, nor the occasion on which M—— was rebuked for walking on a carpet placed in our room for our own use. No Chawia is so ignorant as not to know that a European cannot slip his boots on and off at will, and should allow for this, as he does for other unpleasant peculiarities of the Moghrabi.

The flow of trade began to slacken after our first few days, and M—— found it necessary to replenish our store of silver coin, so he and Tahr left for Batna and Lambessa before dawn one morning with the prospect of an all day ride across very rough country. The kaid was determined that I should not be dull in their absence, and, mounting me on one of his own mules, he took me with him to see his country. We conversed as far as possible in the language of signs, he being unable to speak more than a few words of French, and I having only a scanty travelling knowledge of Arabic and that of the Egyptian dialect.

The territory of Bouzina through which we passed was very plain and bare. It comprised a long expanse of undulating barrenness dotted with most discouraging scraps of cultivation and juniper bushes. On the outskirts of the village at the highest point of the surrounding plateau two or three stone watch-towers covered every approach. One was square, one round, and crowned with a sort of fighting-top carried on a wooden platform. They were relics of times now past and were fast falling

into decay. Beneath their shadow were the graveyard and the ruins of what had been a large marabout's tomb and mosque. A few miles' ride brought us to a more prepossessing district. We crossed a stream, and immediately found ourselves in a little village—a colony of Bouzina—embowered in an ilex forest which climbed from it right up to the summit of the range that separated the “Wed Bouzina” from the “Wed Abdi.” Amongst the lower branches of the oaks were numerous goats, endeavouring to reach the less prickly leaves of the top. The shepherd boys sold me a little flute covered with a pretty pattern incised in red and from which it is possible to extract a tune. The note of these flutes is wonderfully mellow and powerful for so small an instrument, and its far-off cadence among the hills keeps inundating the brain with half-forgotten snatches of Virgil with which it is unnecessary to harass the reader.

On the hillside were a gang of thirty Bouzina workmen engaged in making a mule road for the Government. A French engineer was in command, but all the foremen were Italians, and with them we shared a frugal repast in the shelter of their tent. The natives get about thirty sous a day, which seems a high wage; and of course the Italians draw a good deal more, as they can only work during the early months of the summer, the rest of which they are free to spend in their own homes. One of them said he had been several years at Pittsburg but spoke hardly any English. They were all from North Italy—never from Naples or the south, at least in our experience.

From the summit of the col is a fine view of a great Valley—Wed Abdi—its opposite flanks dotted with villages and hamlets, its bottom green with corn, and evidently of great fertility. There were at least a dozen different centres of population in sight from this ridge—all

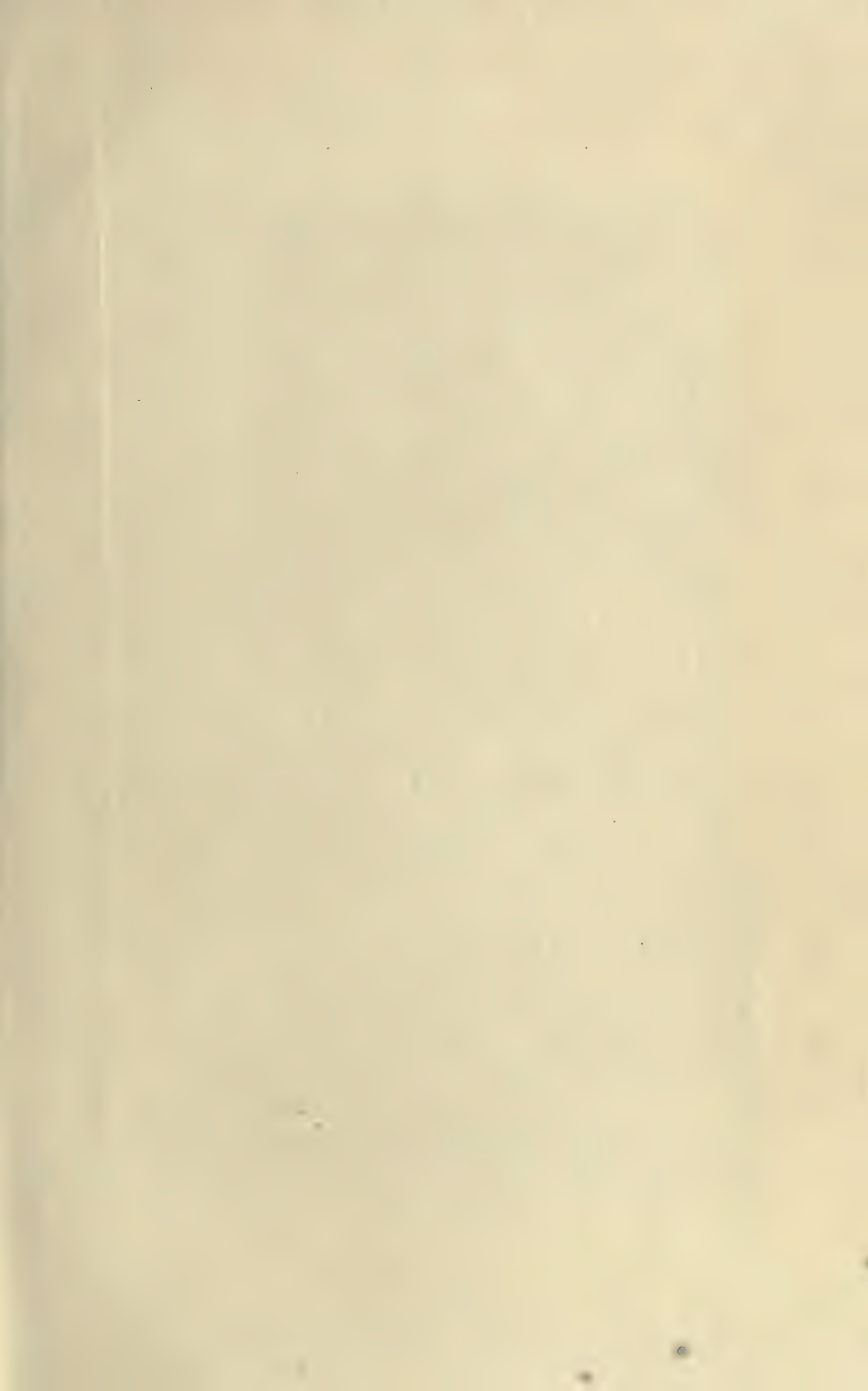
of them Chawia. As the Kaid and I sat looking at the panorama, he giving me the names of the village to put into a sketch, a cuckoo flew past us and down the valley, calling to its mate. The natives say, both of cuckoos and swallows, that they go away in the autumn and return in the spring. If this is true, and I have no reason to doubt it, their winter haunts must be somewhere south of the Sahara, unless indeed they find there in the oases enough water and insect life to support them in their millions. Others come *viâ* Sicily from Europe, swelling the numbers of their migratory Algerian and Moroccan congeners. Whither do they go?

On the way home we halted at the house of one Abdullah, an old and venerable Turk with all the courtesy of his race. He made us sit down and would insist on our partaking of refreshments, honey and walnuts mixed (this is a delightful sweet, but somewhat rich), and dates washed down with what he said was tea—a liquid tasting of cinnamon and apparently full of black pepper. Abdullah's tongue wagged so fast and in such excellent French that I blushed for my own performance. It was pardonable, however, to speak worse French than one who had been in the French service since the Crimean war. Abdullah had been shoulder to shoulder with our own troops at the Redan, he had been with ill-starred Maximilian in Mexico, he had fought over the liberation of Italy; his last service had been in '70 and '71, with which war he was so disgusted that he had come to pass the rest of his life in the retirement of the Aurès. We parted rather regretfully, for if Abdullah liked a good listener, for my part I had hopes of gaining a great deal of useful information, apart from the stories of battles and bloodshed in the telling of which he evidently took great delight. We pressed him to come and visit us at Bouzina, but I never saw the old

fellow again. The information of such men, married to native wives, travelled, educated, thoroughly conversant with European ideas and a European language, and of the same religion as their neighbours, should be invaluable. In every case, however, it must be received with circumspection—for their contempt for the native is often keener than that of a European similarly placed, and they frequently take little interest in the, to them, absurd legends and customs of their adopted fellow countrymen.

If the greater part of the territory over which the Kaid of Bouzina exercises authority is uninteresting, the same cannot be said of the small fraction of it contained within the bed of the river.

The "Wed Bouzina," rising, as its name implies, close behind the village, where it gushes a pure bright fountain from the living rock, is the mainstay of the population. Along its course for the first few hundred yards it is utilised as a convenient washing-place. Numbers of women may be seen, with their skirts tucked up like an artist's milkmaid, so as to display a comely foot and ankle, trampling their clothes clean upon the rocks. Below them are chattering girls filling goat-skin bags—sometimes depilated and tanned and painted gorgeous hues—with water for the use of their families. Little children are dabbling and making mud pies after their kind all the world over; mules and cattle are leisurely quaffing an already enriched liquid at the ford, just below which is a dam and sluice, followed by many others, conducting a rapid stream to turn the turbine of a mill. The mill is a common feature along all the watercourses in the Aurès. The runnel, deflected some little distance above so as to increase its fall, impinges on the mill wheel in a steady stream of water from a chute measuring about a foot each





THE BED OF THE STREAM AT BOUZINA.

way. With showers and spray and a great groaning of wooden machinery the rivulet, having done its work, dashes impetuously to join the parent river. Within the mill the mighty stones go slowly round in a firm bed of mud and rock. Above, a hopper holds the grain, which trickles slowly into a funnel-shaped pan beneath, and this is held by a rope at the angle of rest. This pan is kept gently vibrating by a piece of wood having fastened to it a float which joggles on the revolving inequalities of the upper grindstone. The stream of grain is thus automatically controlled. If the stones move faster a more violent agitation discharges larger quantities from the funnel; if slower, the grain falls little by little into the hollow of the grindstone. Sacking is placed around this ingenious contrivance, so that little is wasted. Below, the flour issues steadily from the nether stone and forms a little cone upon the floor. This year the miller's life should be a happy one, for the rain has stored somewhere in the ground beneath Bouzina an unusual quantity of water, sufficient for the time of summer drought. The wady should be full enough for him till November brings a new supply of motive power. Meanwhile his clients reap the benefit as well as he, for the crops stand thick this year upon the irrigated terraces, and even on the waterless mountains above they are not altogether absent. Beside the water-chutes that drive the mill is the miller's garden, full of walnuts, figs, apricots, and pomegranates in their season. Here the Administrator himself often pitches his tent in the height of summer, making Bouzina at once a hill station and a centre for hunting expeditions.

A little below this mill is another, but here the stream has been swollen by the rivulets that a side cañon discharges into it, where the women are stamping clothes, and overhead grey moss-grown rocks ooze little waterfalls

and natural showers of filmy spray. Thenceforth the stream runs strong and clear, now dashing in foam over rocks and gravel, now sliding like a sheet of crystal over recumbent slabs long since reduced to smooth subjection to its will, anon winding in deep gorges where it seems lost among the potholes—bewildered by the thunderous echoes of its own full-throated roar. It was pleasant to wander under the cherry blossom and listen to the cascades that fell



ON THE WAY TO THE GARDENS—BOUZINA.

from the corn terraces below a great red cliff, to stroll neck deep in mossy lanes, pent between hawthorn bushes and the silvery arms of fig and ash. Towards the sunset the valley turns to meet a range of blue and purple hills, its course distinguished from the ochre rocks that wall it in by fields of verdant corn, parted the one from the other by the delicate bronze tracery of a thousand fruit trees. A shepherd lad behind a bleating flock strides blithely through the gathering twilight. Wherever the eye turns

is a picture. Yet no artistic mind has ever yet explored the wonderland of the Chawia mountains ; no painter has thrown upon canvas the charm of this, the meeting-place of East and West, where not a vestige of the modern world has come to break the chain that links the present with an immemorial past.

A laughing girl, at her father's bidding, sold us a silver trinket that she wore around her neck. Her dress was white, her feet bare. A crimson shawl upon her shoulders, a grass green apron, challenged but did not vanquish the effect of glossy brown-black hair ill confined beneath a kerchief of yellow silk—another picture and no one to paint it. The photographer wrings his hands in despair—such sights are not for him. When some one has done painting over-decorated Italian churches and homely Italian women let him try a little further south for new effects of life and colour. One can live in the Aurès for two or three francs a day. One has the right to live for nothing at the Kaid's expense, but, as I say, two or three francs a day make a handsome present for a poor man—no one is really rich here—and a little civility besides costs nothing.

Packing pottery in boxes sounds a simple and easy task. It was not. In the first place scarcely a box or nail could be had. In the second, chopped straw and halfa grass, brought sparingly in single handfuls by the children, were not good materials to work with. Finally, after half a day's work there came the transport difficulty. Mule panniers of wicker work seemed scarcely enough protection against hard knocks from rocky walls and intrusive ilex trunks, still the risk had to be run. It need hardly be said that no wheeled vehicle of any kind was to be found nearer than Lambessa, and if it were it could not live five miles on the Aurès tracks. However, we got the

things away at last, and having closed the market began to inquire in a tentative fashion after victims for physical investigation. With infinite trouble, during which our poor host, who had in virtue of his position to bear the burden and heat of the day, was nearly dissolved in tears, we conquered the superstitious fears of the men of Bouzina by the application of the smallest silver charm issued from the French mints. A blanket—my travel-stained “Queen’s Brown”—made a fair background for photography. A bottle of carbolic acid, into which M—— periodically dipped the callipers, removed the last load from our consciences. When once the measurements were set going it was simply a question of selecting suitable candidates—or rather of rejecting the numerous boys and immature beardless youths who wished to pose as representatives of their forefathers, until every now and then a kind of blight would set in and no one would submit himself to the operations for love or money. Then a bolder man than the rest would start the ball merrily rolling once more, and so, by honeyed words (in an unknown tongue), by the laying on of hands, and by similar persuasive means, we finished a scientific description of more than thirty Chawia. But the greatest triumph of all was M——’s. He was determined to have photographs of the tops of the victims’ heads, and he got them, by fair means, in full view of the city of Bouzina. We were no longer possibly mad: any reasonable man could see it for himself beyond the shadow of a doubt; and we are much mistaken if the memory of the two Englishmen possessed by ten thousand jinn is yet forgotten in the district. The nett outcome of three days’ work of this description may be stated in a popular form. The Bouzina people—at least the men—are of medium height—none exceeded 5ft. 10in.—are rather longer headed than

ourselves, and are all white (though among them are not so many fair men as at El Arbaa). Their eyes are generally widely opened and hazel; their noses straight or slightly hooked; their hair dark brown to black. They are all very dirty and smell of couscous.

Among the younger men we recognised two members of a certain 'Varsity Eight; and most of the boys were as thorough little Britishers in the face as any one would meet in a day's march through an English-speaking country. All, or nearly all, were tanned a rich orange colour, such as one sees on the faces of haymakers and harvesters or of a regiment home from India.

Before M——'s expedition to recruit our finances we had been pretty well guarded by two of the Kaid's servants, who retired to sleep at a preternaturally early hour before our door. Notwithstanding that we narrowly escaped a frost most nights, and that they had nothing better than the grass mats and blankets we lent to cover them, they never stirred even when trodden on until the sun was well above the horizon. Now we were to have the additional protection of Fox. Fox was an English hound who belonged to the Administrator, but whom a roving life suited better than the ease and plenty of Lambessa. This most worthy animal attached himself to us for the rest of our time in the Aurès, and we parted with him with sincere regret on both sides. We had a new cavalier, also, a Turk, Hassen ben Mohammed, who impressed us very favourably from the outset, for he had made the journey in under seven hours from headquarters, and, though evidently extremely hungry himself, refused to eat a mouthful till he saw us well started. Good as Tahr had been (though he had got into some scrape and had been dismissed our service) Hassen was ten times better, and so invaluable did we find him that we wonder still how M.

Arribe could spare his right-hand man to accompany two Englishmen for an indefinite period. We could only ascribe it to one cause, to the extreme kindness and consideration displayed by the Administrator in all his dealings with us. Hassen had what is vulgarly called the "gift of the gab." He would begin to chatter like a monkey as soon as he rose in the morning, and was seldom altogether silent until he retired again at night. His French was excellent, and full of little characteristic quips and cranks which, though they were repeated so often, never failed to make us smile. Whatever happened—if a mule was not forthcoming; if our blood boiled at some enormity; if Fox was hungry (as he always was)—Hassen would preface his remarks on the subject with, "*Ça ne fait rien!*" One night, as usual, the servants had neglected to clean the billy, and we boiled our tea in the remains of a stew. "Ah, Mon Dieu!" said Hassen, regarding the greasy scum on the top of his cup, "*ça ne fait rien, c'est à dire, ça ne fait pas maigre!*" All inanimate objects of whatever nature were to Hassen "*cette machine-là*," from a silver ornament to a manure heap, from Fox's tail to a pair of boots. Yet Hassen had his little faults—three of them. He would attract our notice in the distance by a cry of "*Dih*"—a word which all the natives use to one another, and which may be Arabic "*deh*" ("this one"), or French "*Dis*" ("say"). Anyhow, it annoyed us, but we never broke him of its use for the simple reason that he could never remember (or pronounce) our names. He was also too much addicted to "tu" and "toi" to please a rigid stickler for etiquette, and we were all the more irritated because, having ourselves been taught French on "*comment vous portez-vous?*" lines, we were quite unable, without first mentally reciting tenses of irregular verbs, to pay him back in his own coin. Lastly, Hassen had a weakness for

absinthe which he did not attempt to conceal, and which, as it never led to anything but an increase in his vivacity, and was unaccompanied by any perceptible subsequent reaction, we did not perhaps do so much to check as we ought. Besides, taking one day with another, he did not consume more Pernods than a Scotchman is reputed to "tak wee drappies," and as the practice pleasantly reminded M—— of his native land, we winked at it, and enjoyed the astonishment of the good Muslims who saw a co-religionist tasting forbidden joys while two Infidels drank only milk and water.

Just before we left Bouzina two characteristic incidents occurred. We asked whether they had any decorated gourds for sale. Numerous gourds arrived, but all without a scratch, and were accordingly rejected. A few hours afterwards I came suddenly upon a man seated at the back of our house occupied in ornamenting one of these plain gourds with a knife. The Chawia are a business people to the backbone. There was no "take it or leave it, it is the best thing made" about them. If we did not like an article they tried to find or manufacture one to suit our aberrant taste.

A young man brought up a much clipped Spanish dollar, protesting that it was a Roman coin of immense value. Returning with the coin unsold he allowed his disappointment to express itself in rather forcible language to an acquaintance a few yards down the path. There was evidently some source of grievance between these two, and in a few seconds they were at fisticuffs with an admiring circle of loafers enjoying the sport. Suddenly a woman—the mother, probably, of one of the combatants—rushed up and without more ado broke through the ring and clouted her boy on the head with such good will that he abandoned the unequal struggle.

Many of the people of Bouzina are tattooed—a practice which is expressly forbidden by the Koran, but which prevails, nevertheless, among all the Berbers of Algeria. Generally speaking the devices are on the wrists or forearm, and the same marks appear indifferently on persons of either sex. The patterns are not a little complicated, but their theme is always the same as that found on the carpets, snuff-horns, or decorated pottery. The girls often have, in addition, a blue cross on the forehead between the eyes. At first we thought it meant that they had arrived at marriageable age, but afterwards we saw quite young children with the same design. All travellers in Algeria have noticed these crosses, and some have been at pains to show how they are the last relics of former Christianity. Indeed the Kaid at Bouzina said that an Englishman had told him his ancestors were Christians before they were Muslims, and seemed to be rather troubled by the statement. Now it is a thousand pities that reckless theories like these should be hastily bandied about and used to scandalise respectable people. There is not a shred of evidence that any number of the Berbers were ever at any period of their history other than pagans or Mohammedans. Doubtless in the palmy days of North African Christianity such of them as happened to dwell in the Roman towns were converted. Beyond that the probabilities that the race as a race was ever Christian sink to zero. As to the cross, it is found in every part of the world entering into all kinds of designs. There are any number of crosses on Turkish and Persian carpets whose authors would scout the idea that they had any Christian significance whatever. The cross is a feature in the ornamentation of the robes of hibernians depicted on XIXth Dynasty sculptures in Egypt. I have in my possession a bamboo tobacco pipe from British New

Guinea on which crosses form the principal decorative element. The Roman Catholic Father who gave it to me said, on my remarking that his mission had no doubt introduced this sign to the natives, that he wished it were so, but that my surmise was completely wrong as he knew from personal experience.

It would be as easy to show that the Berber device is a svastika or fylfoot, a Buddhist rather than a Christian sign, were it worth the expenditure of ink and paper to do so. We went to Algeria without any prejudices on this or on any other kindred point, with the intention of finding out what we could about the Berber inhabitants and their affinities, and we came independently to the conclusion, before we ever discussed the matter, that if the natives, the aboriginals, were at any time Christians, there is not a particle of proof of it, and that it is highly improbable there ever will be.

CHAPTER VI

MENAA AND THE ABDI VALLEY

Poachers—The Pax Gallica—Marble—Town and People of Menaa—Blackmen—Good Quarters—Scenes on the Terraces—Position of Men and Women as Regards Work—Politics, Past and Present—Silver Ornaments—Traps—Shoes—A Marabout's Tomb—The Government School—The Mosque—An Old Graveyard—Roman Remains—Landmarks—Skulls in the Trees—From Summer to Winter—Pottery Making—Weaving—Married Life—Politicians—Houses—Hockey—Acquisitions—El Baali, its Food, Houses, and Inhabitants—Shaving Heads—A Family on the March—A Leaky Roof—Quaint Quarters—Cards—Snow—Chimneys—A Contrast.

WE left Bouzina at an early hour, but not earlier than Kaid Tahr himself. His errand was wrapped in mystery: he himself simply bade us goodbye over night, and in the morning was not to be seen. The object of his expedition, we heard, was the capture of some cattle herds from El Arbaa, who drove their stock on to Bouzina pasturage to the loss and vexation of that village. That "old swine," as Hassen called him, following Tahr's nomenclature, was doubtless mixed up in the affair, and this it appears was the robbery of which he had spoken on the road over the pass. Our time did not admit of such diversions as sitting up in the small hours behind a rock to apprehend poachers, or we should much like to have assisted. There was probably a mild fight, and a little

excitement would have been welcome to us at this time. In leaving Bouzina we felt that we left behind a good friend. The chief was not a strong man, as his conduct often showed; but he was, *par excellence*, a gentleman, and a man whose kindness was only equalled by his honesty. He was one of the few natives of Algeria, we both agreed, who would be welcomed at our own homes as men and brothers and something more. It is not at all probable



A CHAWIA SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK.

that any of them will ever come to England, but if they do, they shall have from me board and lodging, couscous and mutton to their heart's content.

The road to Menaa lay down the valley, part of which has been already described. The day was fine but greyer than had been usual of late, still we had sun enough to cast bright lights and heavy shadows on the reddish cliffs and sombre hills behind. Everywhere our path was intersected by irrigation channels conveying life and moisture

to the terraces below. Here and there were scattered mills and houses whose comparative isolation spoke of the *pax Gallica* that had made it possible to build them. No longer could such a matter as the poaching above referred to become, as no doubt it often did become in times past, the cause of war between the valleys. No longer can marauding nomads drive their herds into the rich cornlands of the Chawia, as far as the fierce tribesmen could be thrust back before them. Peace reigns supreme. Presently will come the question of an increased population—already attested by these same outlying settlements. What is to be done with superabundant Chawia? Their country, never a rich one, can hardly be made to grow more than it does at present. Already the Chawia practise farming almost on the Chinese system. Every inch of fertile ground is irrigated and manured and fenced and carefully tended. The evil days of semi-starvation for many cannot be long averted by scratching the barren hills and trusting Providence to provide once every few years a rainfall sufficient to produce a scanty crop of barley. The Chawia will have to be employed, and here, at their doors, is a new industry almost as yet untouched.

Near the little village of Tagoust the ground is seamed in all directions with white and shining veins of excellent marble. Tagoust itself is built of white marble blocks rudely chipped and knocked into position with a simple iron hammer. The clay is red, saturated probably with iron that has also in some instances stained the veins of marble with beautiful shades of brown and rose, and of this clay the mortar is made by the simple expedient of digging a hole in the ground, filling it with water, stirring, and kneading the result to the proper consistency. The marble has already been quarried in places, but at present transport by mule over the existing tracks is more expen-

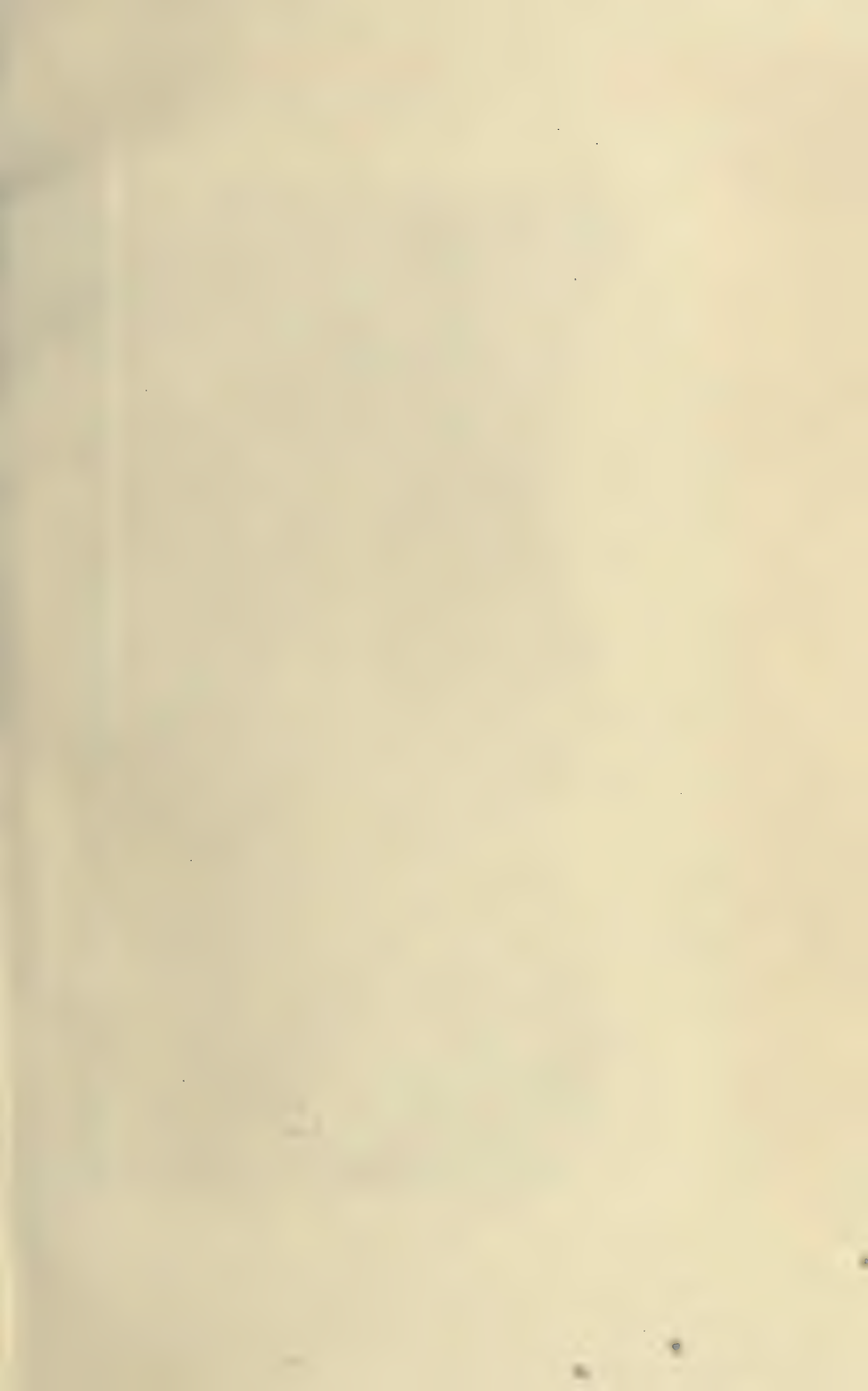
sive than so heavy a commodity can bear. It remains to be seen whether the new mule road will make the industry the success it should be with a railway within twenty miles and the growing towns of Biskra and El Kantara demanding good and ornamental material for new houses.

If marble will not pay, there should be iron in due season, and, further down the valley towards Menaa, gypsum in considerable quantities. Away over the hills at Taghit, not many miles from the Abdi valley, is a quick-silver mine, originally the property of an Englishman who sunk a small fortune in its exploitation. Now, with a company and the new road, Taghit should prove a source of income to the shareholders and to the Chawia of the neighbourhood. Such are among the immediate commercial resources of the Aurès.

We halted for half an hour at Tagoust to drink coffee with the Kaid and his ministers. Though most of the houses are of marble, a few are made of sun-dried bricks of the red clay, and the villages about have a curious ruddy look which we noticed nowhere else. A European dwelling surrounded by poplars and cypresses stands quaintly isolated in the valley near by. Whether it was the home of some one interested in the marbles, or of some person who found it advisable to seek a quiet country retreat, Hassen could not say, though he speculated much about the tenant of "*cette machine-là*," and finally discovered that whoever he was it didn't matter. Below Tagoust the Wed Bouzina has become a river. We crossed it in a place where it was twenty yards wide and reached the mules' knees. Its bed was overgrown with oleanders and brambles, while the gaunt arms of fig-trees—here, as we were many feet lower, already putting forth some promise of green leaves and fruit—threatened to drag us from our seats. The walnut-trees are to be counted by the

million, and a little pink peach blossom gave a touch of colour to the gardens. For some distance the track follows the bed of the river. Then it ascends sharply to the left and zigzags up a mountain over one red col towards another which is grey. This last pass was on the same range as that from which Kaid Tahr and I had viewed the Abdi valley and heard the cuckoo. Again the Abdi—the White Stream, lay at our feet, the largest and most important watercourse of the Aurès. Right opposite was Nara with its terraces crowned by the white tower of a picturesque mosque—the djemaa. Fine mountains rose towards the north-east, trending away in the direction of always invisible Chellia, one of the highest peaks in Algeria, but from no point of view a very prominent object. In the immediate foreground ran wavy lines of sangars recalling the Iron Gates. All up the sides of the mountain the dwarf thorn-bushes were in full flower—small bluish purple blossoms that attracted numerous insects. Halfa and stunted juniper struggled for the mastery among the thorn. Half way down the hill towards Menaa we passed a juniper bigger than the rest hung with shreds of clothing in every stage of decay. This was the only instance we saw in the Aurès of a custom which is common enough in Kabylia, where the vicinity of marabouts' tombs is thus decorated by the offerings of the pious.

Menaa—or, as it has been justly called, the "Queen of the Aurès"—stands on a rocky knoll separated from the mountains by a gorge on the eastern side, and by the whole valley of the Abdi—here some miles broad—on the western. One side of the hill is too steep and rocky to offer a site for even a Berber house, and a grove of prickly pears has taken up its station on it, covering it from base to summit with their dull green, fleshy leaves. The





MENAA.

town is built facing the north and west, rising pyramidally from a river both deep and swift and full of barbel, so at least it is said; we never saw any fish here or anywhere else in the district. Stepping-stones, half immersed, give a precarious foothold to a European boot, and we were always glad to be across the Abdi without a wetting. Great groves of fig-trees in full leaf—such is the measure of the climatic difference between Menaa and Bouzina—shaded the boulders of the bed. To a pedestrian the slippery staircase of stones and logs that leads up the rock to Menaa is a matter for careful consideration. For mules it is easily passable; but for Hassen's horse it constituted a formidable obstacle. By dint of a great deal of bad language in Turkish and French he rode the animal triumphantly to the top. It was his state entry. Afterwards he was content to walk. Nor did the difficulties that attend a mounted man cease at this point. The lanes between the houses, which are of the usual type, are often covered in, sometimes with special roofs, sometimes by the floor of a room above, and as there are no byelaws to regulate the height of these arcades, one's head is continually in danger. The usual polished stone divans are scattered plentifully under the shadow of these roofs, and, as it was the Mohammedan Sunday—observed here as a day of abstention from commercial pursuits and of frequent visits to the mosque—they were occupied by a mixed crowd playing a draught-like game, smoking, and chatting. Among the lines of bronzed Chawia faces were one or two as black as coal—their owners being casual vagrants from the Soudan, or slaves emancipated since the French occupation.

We had not proposed to make any physical observations at Menaa because of its proximity to the Arab villages further south. It is, moreover, the commercial capital of the

Aurès, and, like all such towns, is certain to contain a more or less mixed population. In any case the sight of those black faces, with the shining rows of pearly teeth, would have deterred us from the compilation of facts about the heads and faces of the Berber families to whom they or their ancestors might have belonged. It is a peculiar curse of Mohammedanism that, although the prophet says Allah made the black man for a slave, and clearly regarded him



GROUP AT MENAA.

as an inferior being, in every Mohammedan country he has been adopted not only as a slave but as a husband, and his women as wives. And the black man has not failed to leave his mark on the population. In some places, where the climate suits him better than it does the Arab, the Semitic blood is being slowly but surely supplanted by the negro. It is partly the fear of something of this kind—not a fear consciously expressed or even clearly conceived—that makes our Australian and Canadian brothers so loth

to admit the yellow man. It is not all "trades union selfishness"—that in itself is a reasonable and intelligible position—it is rather the instinctive fear of being supplanted or degraded by fusion with an alien stock.

However, to return to Menaa. The local Kaid and his two clever sons welcomed us with great cordiality and ushered us into the best house we had yet seen. A massive door gave entrance to a paved hall overlooking a courtyard, which in a Spanish house would have been the *patio*. Round the hall, which was only partially covered by the roof, were five or six guest-chambers neatly distempered a creamy pink, and each beautifully clean, furnished with a mat to lie on, and a window which was, in my own case, partially glazed. Another door gave access to the private apartments and offices. Below was the stabling round the courtyard, and, under our rooms, the café, which the Kaid rented to a gentleman of Hebraic appearance.

Two *gens d'armes* whose acquaintance we had already made at Bouzina greeted us with effusion. The elder man was a veteran of seventy, an Alsatian, who was much rejoiced to find us cognisant of a few words of German. His companion, a good-natured country-bred youth, was also excellent company, and when the local schoolmaster, a Frenchman, joined us at dinner in the evening, we felt restored to civilisation. Hassen's sallies kept everybody in a state of good-humour. Even the dignity of the Kaid did not escape this searching tongue. If he was a marabout—the Kaid had cherished the ambition to be one—"why did he not drink absinthe, why did he allow Fox to touch him?" and so on, and so forth, until the subject was changed by the tact of the schoolmaster, or a halt was called by his military superior, whom he nevertheless addressed as "tu" and "toi" with the same fine sense of

liberty, equality, and fraternity which had already eaten into our souls.

Menaa, though its comparative proximity to the trade routes and the European has somewhat spoilt the people, is nevertheless as full of picturesque corners as any other Chawia settlement. Its narrow streets and, above all, its miles of terrace cultivation, present at every turn some interesting feature. It is a good many hundred feet lower than Bouzina, and the fruit trees were already, many of them, clothed in the bright fresh green of early spring. The corn was in the ear, and a few palm-trees, which do not, however, produce ripe fruit, gave an additional Eastern colouring to the surroundings. The paths that run along the edges of the terraces upon the stone retaining walls, were dotted with people passing and re-passing. Here a woman in a blue gown with a scarlet turban was trying to keep some goats out of the corn in which another figure squatted, pulling up noxious herbs and weeding out the weakly plants. There a man was escorting his two wives to a distant part of the valley, they, not he, carrying on their backs babies, large baskets, or coloured goat-skins full of forage or what not. In another part of the cultivation was a spring overshadowed by a tamarisk, and there a group of laughing girls were gossiping, filling their pitchers and water-skins or slowly coming back towards the village bent double, like ants, beneath the load.

It must not be thought that because the women do so much hard work that the men do nothing. Far from it. Their tanned faces are alone enough to prove that they, too, labour in the sun and wind, unlike the Arab, who is never so happy as when seated in the shade half asleep with a dozen friends as lazy as himself. The Chawia man is master and tyrant in his own house—by law, not always,

as we saw at Bouzina, by custom ; still he ploughs with the light wooden plough of his people—a “machine” without share and with but a single rest for the arm, drawn generally by mules or oxen ; he sows ; he reaps ; it is he that drives the laden mules, and, in his youth, herds the sheep and cattle on the far off mountain-side. Neither in the winter snows, nor in the fierce suns of summer does he spare himself ; formerly, too, it was his duty and



TERRACE-CULTIVATION AT MENAA.

privilege to bear arms in the defence of the community to which he belonged. It is not easy for us, long habituated to the piping times of internal peace, to imagine the wear and tear upon the men of a people which is not yet at harmony with itself. Not only are there domestic rivalries and blood feuds within and without the village, but there are frequent inter-tribal wars, the planning and plotting alone of which provide occupation for the best heads in the village, just as their execution demands the constant services of the stoutest arms.

It is not too much to say that among primitive agricultural peoples the often asserted laziness of the males is, in many cases, a libel. It is, as a rule, only after the great peace has been declared, either by a European power or by its missionaries, that the traveller can visit his lazy men at all; the fact being that their chief occupation is destroyed by the same agency that throws their country open to his observation. In the case of pastoral peoples the indictment is too often true, but the Chawia are neither shepherds or gardeners only, but both, so that, war being abolished, they have plenty of occupation to fall back upon.

As to the political organisation of the Aurès—the Commune Mixte—there is at the head the Administrator at Lambessa, for the present, capital of the district. To him all the village Kaids are responsible for order and good government. We heard little complaint that the taxation was heavy and concluded that it was exceedingly light. It was probably the invading Arabs who introduced government by shêkhs in the first instance. The pre-Mohammedan system may have resembled that in vogue in Kabylia till within the last half century—a folk-moot, a council of elders and an annually elected mayor—the Amin. This, however, is nothing but a supposition based on analogy. In the Aurès the French found patriarchal government in full working order, and simply adapted it to their own ends by an interchange of the old, or the creation of new, dignitaries among the villages. The general result seems to be good, but in a few individual cases there is a little friction between the new Kaid and his people, over whom he has naturally less influence than his hereditary predecessor.

Menaa is noted for its honey and its silver work. Of the former we partook very freely, of the latter we found

little new that we had not seen already at Bouzina. The ornaments with which the women are covered literally from head to heel are of the most primitive manufacture, and their beauty is a matter of opinion. The metal used is supposed to be pure silver, but is probably compounded of old coins of uncertain value and of French silver, which is generally alloyed like our own. A certain amount of what purports to be real silver wire is imported from Tunis and Algiers, but if it finds its way into the melting-pot it is probably in the company of a yet baser composition. The forms and designs employed are not at all characteristically Chawia, and the same applies to the almost identical silver work of Kabylia. There were long necklaces of scented woods with roughly graven silver beads strung between the rows and lavishly supplemented by pieces of natural coral from the fisheries off the coast. This rough coral is very highly prized, and if I were returning to the Aurès I should take a large number of those cheap and tasteless coral necklaces, retailed mostly at seaside resorts, for purposes of trade. The people of Menaa absolutely refused to believe that there are whole islands and towns of coral and that in some parts of the world it is no more valuable than their own marble was to them. A favourite form of ornament is a sort of cart wheel hung round with chains from which depend crescents and acorn-shaped hollow balls of silver. Another, a square box which will not open, is supposed to contain a portion of the Koran and to act as a talisman. We bought two feet of the porcupine, mounted in silver and worn round the neck; these are the especial charms of the matrons. Besides these there is an inconsiderable variety of bracelets and earrings and pendants, inlaid for the most part with lumps of red coral or composition intended to imitate coral, both of which additions produce, when in conjunc-

tion with bad workmanship, an indescribably garish effect. Nevertheless the beauties of Menaâ and Chir manage to extract from such unpromising material a barbaric kind of display. A single woman at the latter place could be heard clanking her huge anklets together all over the



CHAWIA WOMAN IN FULL DRESS.

village. Her portrait is here reproduced to show the whole gamut of jewellery.

Ingenious little traps for birds and jackals attracted us. The former are made of wool and bent pieces of wood, and baited with a grain of the maize that grows on the terraces.

As to the jackal trap it was so exceedingly powerful that we wondered how the victim could escape having his leg amputated by the jaws on the spot. If this did not happen the jackal retired, dragging the trap and a heavy piece of wood attached to it by a chain, thus leaving a spoor easy for the hunter to follow.

Although Menaa was perceptibly warmer than Bouzina, a heavy thunderstorm in the direction of Lambessa cooled the air so effectually that, though we escaped with nothing more than slight showers, a fire was welcome, and we sat round it receiving our visitors. Several fine specimens of antique flint-lock guns and pistols mounted in silver and studded with coral were offered at a hundred francs apiece, but as one can get similar and even better articles of the same kind at Biskra for the same price we did no business. There are excellent cobblers at Menaa, of whom I bought many pairs of shoes—some dyed in patterns that point to a derivation from sandals, of which several kinds are in use; perhaps the commonest being of grass provided with two long bands that cross each other up the calf over a puttie of rags. Such a sandal was worn by Roman soldiers, and indeed still is by some Spanish troops of the present day. The real Chawia shoe is not turned up at the point like those in use further east, but having an ample space in front for the proper expansion of the great toe, a tongue, and a high heel-strap, it makes a most comfortable foot-gear for the mountains. Those who climb will appreciate especially the advantage of being able to spread the big toe even though it be cased in leather.

A few new pieces of the hand-made pottery were bought in, and several of the worked nosebags with which the richer Chawia ornament the noses of their mules. All these things had to be packed, which was done at last, Hassen chattering the while about our different varieties of

"machines" without the least pause or intermission. The only cure we found for this loquacity was a walk, which he heartily detested, like most men who ride a great deal. The very sight of cameras being got ready to go out used to make him "tired"—a species of fatigue which fortunately first affected his tongue.

In the course of one of these expeditions we found the tomb of a Marabout—a holy man—painted cream colour. It had a curious compromise between a dome and a spire on the top, and the whole building could not have much exceeded eight feet in height. At the foot were broken crocks, in some of which we noted pieces of charcoal and other unrecognisable offerings to the memory of the saint.

It is said that no whole unbroken pot is ever used for this purpose, whether because of a natural reluctance to waste good crockery on a spirit (all spirits are fools, bigger fools almost than any human being, as the records of folklore and of psychical research demonstrate every day) who does not know a good thing when he sees it, or because in former ages the Chawia broke the bowl, shivered the spear and bow, and perhaps sacrificed the favourite wife on the tomb of their departed chiefs. Around Menaa is the very home of terrace cultivation. Every natural swelling is utilised, every hollow. On all sides run the channels carried overhead in the deeper lanes, themselves water-courses, through pipes formed of hollow logs. Sometimes two or three pipes will cross one above another at different levels. Here is the counterpart of the big main full of tubes for conducting gas, water, air, or sewage, or electricity, which main is ordinarily supposed to be a modern invention.

Menaa is fortunate in having a broader valley and more streams from which to irrigate it than the other villages of the Aurès. Where these streams have laid down a fairly

level alluvial deposit, filling up the whole valley, there is no great difficulty in tapping them at a point slightly higher than the highest terrace to be watered. When, however, as is usually the case, in the upper portions of the Abdi, the mountains fall almost sheer to the torrent, the terraces must be made very narrow and steep, and the amount of cultivable land is small. When a side stream joins the main river, as at Nara, a little oasis has been built up and a proportionately larger population is to be found.

There is an excellent Government school not far from the town, the master being a Frenchman. He was delighted to show us over his buildings and to explain the work he was doing. The teaching is mostly done in Arabic, but French, too, is naturally taught; some knowledge of it being essential if the children are to receive anything more than the most elementary instruction in scientific subjects. For this department a very liberal provision has been made—far more liberal than is usual in English country schools supported by voluntary contributions. There is the beginning of a museum in the schoolroom and a number of little models of common objects, which mean more to the children than whole pages of description. We had a favourable report on the Chawia intelligence—the same kind of report one is used to hear of European children. There was no sudden falling off in brain power about the twelfth year, no astonishing amount of industry or love of discipline. These boys were just ordinary, dirty, unwilling, little white vagabonds who possessed, for all that, capabilities which removed them to a higher plane than that occupied by the clean, willing, altogether wonderful, small black prodigies we hear so much about in many parts of the world. One of the Kaid's sons had been educated here. His French was excellent—for a native—his manners

irreproachable, and he seemed capable of taking an interest in any topic that came before him. It need hardly be said that the prosperity of this institution is largely due to the careful abstention from religious interference which characterises the French Government in all its dealings with the Algerians. No better proof can be found of the absolutely unsectarian nature of the teaching than the presence in the school of the sons of marabouts, who would themselves one day be marabouts, of the most strict and uncompromising Mohammedanism.

Close by the school is a mosque, where the children receive their religious education from spiritual pastors and masters of their own race. The arrangement seemed about as good as it could be. Each teacher attended to his own department. The Frenchman, for his part, instructed little boys in the real origin and development of the world they saw around them ; the marabout, on the other hand, taught them fairy tales out of the Koran. The teaching was on a different footing. The children never learnt to associate the one set of ideas with the other, and accepted everything that each instructor told them with equal impartiality and confidence. They had no facts suppressed or squared on the one hand, no dogma ignored or distorted on the other. The secular instruction was straightforward and correct, the religious correct and straightforward. What more could be desired ?

In the mosque itself are numerous Roman columns and inscriptions gathered from the fragments of a colony some few hundred yards away. Unfortunately a few are partially screened by the mud-bricks that are largely used in the construction of the edifice.

The schoolmaster had about half an acre or more of terrace, watered on the same system as that of his neighbours, whom he accused of being not unwilling to avail

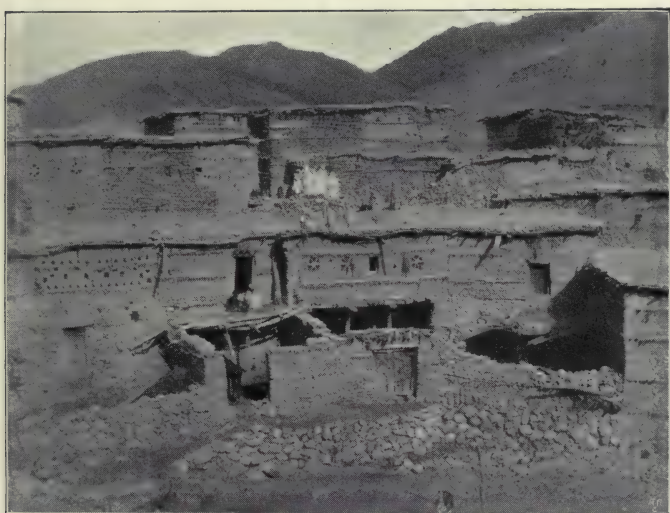
themselves of the fruits of his industry. He had a fine show of cabbages, carrots, lettuces, garlic, and sorrel, for salads, some promising young fruit trees and flowers, amongst which a geranium was already in blossom. Of the management of the water supply he said that it was vested in the Kaid, and not, as in California, in a special official. Disputes, he added, were naturally not uncommon, and if the Kaid did not happen to be a strong, just man, one can readily understand that the fields of his friends and family would be better watered than those of his enemies. A disused graveyard lay close to the school, and as many of the graves were half open and quite uncared for, we made tentative inquiries about the possibility of finding a few skulls lying about, but receiving no encouragement we did not press the point. Most Muslims are very careful not to disturb the graves of the Faithful, but they do not seem to mind when dogs and jackals strew the surrounding country with their bones. In Egypt the fellah has no scruples about pilfering the tombs of his ancestors when they were clearly Kaffirs. He will not touch the Muslim burials of some one else's forefathers. It is also evidently not a question of sentiment, but of superstition in his case; so it is at Menaa. If a craniologist went there and dug up a skull with Roman coins in the grave, he would probably be made welcome, but he would have to flee the country if his spade deviated six inches to right or left and laid bare an Arab.

We gave the Kaid's sons a knife apiece as some sort of recognition of their hospitality, our host himself being obviously above a more direct form of remuneration. In this respect he is, I think, unique among the Aurès kaids. He left upon us the impression of a courtly and strong man, who would have been more genial had he been less of a marabout.

In the Abdi valley Roman ruins abound on all sides. Every few miles the track passes through, or within sight of, huge stone blocks carefully squared and levelled—the remains probably of a late and brief military occupation. The villages are numerous, though small; the country extensively cultivated and well watered. Curious little pillars of stones, a foot or two high, are scattered through the fields for the purpose, we were informed, of warning off trespassers and of marking boundaries. We were never quite happy with regard to this explanation, the piles were so numerous and so widely distributed, still, as we always got the same answer, we were forced to accept this interpretation of their significance. Another common sight in the Aurès, especially in the Abdi valley, is the skull of a horse or mule placed in a fig or other kind of fruit tree. Sometimes they are in the vines (from which raisins are prepared), sometimes they will be placed on a beehive. In one instance we saw a mule's skull where it was unfortunately impossible to photograph it, at Chir, over the inner door that led from a courtyard into a house. The reason invariably given for this strange practice was *pour bonheur*—for good luck—to keep the fruit from falling, the bees from disaster, the house from fire or dilapidation. Possibly one may trace in this custom a survival of the widely spread superstition that a sacrifice must be made whenever nature is in any way interfered with. If a bridge is thrown across a river the spirit of the river is incensed and will destroy it unless, being, as I said, like other spirits, a born fool, he is first appeased by the voluntary sacrifice of a sheep, or the involuntary loss of human life through falls or the upsetting of a caisson. Mediæval England was steeped in this kind of beliefs; perhaps the Berbers, who have hardly arrived at that degree of civilisation, have the idea, or at least carry out

the tradition, of appearing to sacrifice to the outraged forces of the land, the water or the air. The ancient Libyans who invaded Egypt set the heads of oxen over the door of their houses, but perhaps this was as much for a decorative as for a superstitious object.

The trees at Menaa were in leaf. At Chir there were only a few so advanced, and one languid palm-tree, which seemed to be protesting against its transference from the



HOUSES AT CHIR.

sunny south to the inhospitable winters of the Wed Abdi. A few miles higher and the valley was filled with the bare brown branches of the peaches and apricots, whose blossom was not yet out. Beyond this fig-trees ceased; only forests of enormous walnuts, resembling oaks in size and growth, spread across from mountain to mountain. Finally, at El Baali, near the valley's head, tussocks of grass and ilex groves and willows alone remained of all the luxuriant greenery at Menaa. We might have passed

in one day from early summer to late winter. That is one of the fascinations of the Aurès; hygienically speaking, it is one of its dangers.

The Kaid of Chir was a swarthy man who would have passed for an Arab. Indeed, we thought we noticed that the superior families, the men of position and influence, were generally darker than the run of their subjects. However, as this fitted in well with the supposed Arabic origin of their present system of government, we scarcely cared to lay stress on our observation, especially as there was one notable exception and we could make no systematic examination of the persons of "big men."

We were lucky enough to witness the manufacture of the pottery of which we had bought so much. The process is, in reality, so simple and yet so utterly unknown to nine-tenths of English people, that I do not hesitate to give its broad outlines without further ado. In the first place all the earthenware of the Aurès is made exclusively by the women. They know where the right clay is to be obtained, where the proper sand to mix with it occurs. With these two simple materials at hand, and in sufficient quantity, the operator takes a bowl of water, and mixing and kneading the clay and sand together with enough liquid to make the right consistency, she takes a handful and puts it on some convenient support, such as the sanded bottom of an old pot. The next thing to be done is to start a hole in the top of the mass—we will suppose a basin is being made—by the insertion of some such convenient blunt instrument as the thumb. She then proceeds to work the hole larger and larger, drawing out the sides with one hand and smoothing and shaping with the other. A flat piece of wood suffices to pat the outside into shape, the rim being neatly turned by a deft motion of the thumb; the inside is further smoothed with a round stone.

With a final polish the pot is ready ; it is put aside to dry, and when quite hard is set with a number of others in a sort of hearth made of stones. The whole is then covered with a mass of brushwood and logs, old sandals and mats being utilised to help in retaining the heat. The pots are fired sufficiently for all practical purposes in about two hours. A piece of stick suffices to clear away the overlying ashes and to produce each pot as it is wanted for the final



CHAWIA WOMAN MAKING POTTERY.

operation—the varnishing. Taking a piece of gum lac the woman dabs the rim and the inside, or whatever part she wishes to render watertight, while the earthenware is still hot. If a pattern is desired it is got by a more careful application of the gum, or, in some cases, by painting with red ochre before the firing. The operation is now complete, and when the vessel is cool it is ready to hold milk or water or couscous, which last is pretty certain to be its ultimate fate.

It is all delightfully easy and simple, is it not? Well, take some clay and try for yourself. In the first place you will probably not know of any in your neighbourhood, and will send to London for real potter's clay. If you do not do this (the result will be just the same anyhow) you will grub some out of the edge of a pond and mix it with bird-sand, finding the whole operation inexpressibly revolting and filthy. You will then forget to put the base of your pot on a non-adhesive stand, and you will have to bake it with the floor of the room or leave it. You will not be able to draw the sides out evenly, and will leave a thin place through which you will presently see a clumsy finger appearing. I need not continue. Till one has tried to make a piece of earthenware, be it ever so clumsy, one has not the faintest conception of the knowledge, the knack, the perseverance, and the dexterity required to produce a result which will after all be presentable, neither cracked nor flawed, nor unevenly burnt. The Chawia woman does all this quite successfully every week of her life, and succeeds in turning out, without the aid of a wheel, round, even, artistic pottery, with handles and notches and little excrescences and knobs by way of ornament.

The making of pottery is as nothing when compared to the weaving of a burnous. The former takes a day, the latter several weeks. It is, in short, one of those things which we do better in Yorkshire than in the Aurès. First, the wool must be well washed in the stream to get rid as much as possible of the natural grease. You are a Chawia woman, and have probably never heard of soap, nor even seen an advertisement of it; you will, therefore, take a heavy stick and the wool, and, repairing to the nearest creek, proceed to stamp upon it as it lies in the icy water—first securing it with a big stone from being swept away

—and beat it, until it is more or less in a fit condition to work with. By this time, if you were an Englishwoman, you would have a bad cold and chilblains, but being for the nonce Chawia you return in your wet clothes to your house and sit there, doing something else, until the wool and they are dry. You will be in the draught of the door during this time, for, there being no other source of light, it is impossible to do anything at any distance from or to



CHAWIA GIRLS SPINNING.

the side of it. It is now necessary to get the wool into thread, and this is a comparatively pleasant diversion. You stand before your door like the three girls in the photograph and gossip as you run it off the spindle. The Kabyles use two machines for carding: rough carding, with a couple of boards set with spikes, the wool being placed in the grip of one set of teeth, and violently drawn through by the application of the corresponding set on

the other board ; fine carding, with a pair of wire hair brushes.

Now that the thread is ready it must be got on to the frame of the loom and stretched tight ; but it is time to desist, or we shall find ourselves involved in never-ending technicalities and inextricable complications of warp and woof, and all the rest of it. Let me, however, warn the would be burnous-maker that he or she will have to work without a shuttle in true Chawia fashion, passing the threads by dexterous usage of the fingers ; and I can promise that at the end of a week there will be no more than six square inches of burnous, and certainly not so much skin on the fingers and hands of the experimenter in practical anthropology.

We persuaded a girl at El Baali to sit for half an hour motionless at her loom while we photographed the interior. At the end of that time we presented her with a franc, which she accepted with no small wonder. All she had done for the money was to have a rest, her life being passed in sitting behind that same loom passing threads across, and occasionally tightening up the fabric with an iron comb ; it is small matter for astonishment that these people think us mad. Time is no object to them. The women spend their childhood in wishing to get married, their married life in, probably, wishing for a better world.

Whatever they think they constantly act—elope with some young spark, take to the mountains, or die prematurely, leaving a sorrowful husband with an all too numerous family. The Chawia woman is, to be brief, by no means a model wife and mother ; indeed, she is a scandal to all good Arabs by reason of the unblushing manner in which she ignores the face veil, openly talks to men not her husband, father, or brother, while lordling it in her own house, so that her down-trodden mate too

often takes to the society of a café, or, maybe, to himself, another and a better wife.

Mohammedan judicial separation is a matter of a phrase and a witness. Nothing can be easier—on paper—than to get rid of an unpleasant spouse. But a single glance at the sharp-visaged, sharper-tongued matrons of Menaa would go far to convert the most scathing critic of this “fatal facility of divorce.”

Seated on carpeted stone divans we spent a very pleasant evening at Chir, explaining to the Kaid in French of the *bon soir aleikum* variety, the nature of international relations in general, and of those of England, Turkey, and Egypt in particular. For a people who sometimes read a newspaper the Chawia are not very well informed of these matters. I do not know from what source the news in the native journals is obtained, but if, as is probably the case, it is a transcript of that in the French, a little ignorance on most points is excusable in their readers. Hassen, as usual, was exceedingly voluble, but evidently knew less of what he was talking about than anybody present. Chir being a bad place for robbers, in his opinion, he insisted on sleeping with old Fox by his side all night across our door, an act of devotion which, though unnecessary, led us to forgive many of his “*dih*s” and “*tois*.”

The roof of our room, which measured about 20 ft. by 15 ft. by 9 ft. high, was carried on only two crutch pillars—the same as were used at El Arbaa and throughout the Aurès. Many of the houses at Chir have a separate stable beneath them, and their walls are often perforated with the rude rose-windows we had remarked at Biskra. Just beyond the village we saw about a dozen boys playing a game somewhat like hockey. At least they were knocking a round stone about the ground with

the aid of real hockey sticks, and though there seemed to be an absence of any particular rules or regulations they evidently enjoyed it immensely.

We opened another market at Chir and purchased, firstly, a number of wooden spoons. These spoons are made with an adze, the blade of which is grasped in the left hand, the roughly shaped spoon being held in the right. The adze edge is then worked with a slightly circular motion from the tip of the bowl inwards, until enough of the wood has been extracted. The spoon is then carved and finished off with an ordinary knife. Secondly, we acquired an enormous, ancient and well-carved wooden bowl which retained the aroma of the couscous that had stood in it at least three months afterwards, and probably continues to do so. This bowl was a white elephant to us, but as it travelled in the sack with the billy-cans and chocolate it was they rather than it which suffered from the association, and it arrived in perfect condition in England.

El Baali stands well towards the head of the Wed Abdi, among forests of ilex, by the side of a little stream in which the willows were just assuming a first flush of spring colouring. All around the soil was poor and rocky, the grass rank. The wealth of El Baali lies in its herds of cattle and goats. Milk is of no account in the village, neither is honey, for the hives are to be counted by the hundred. The houses, though of the usual Chawia type, are in some cases extraordinarily well and neatly built, and a few have two storeys. The Roman ruins with which the valley is littered supply good square stone, which the inhabitants of El Baali have employed to the best advantage, and the well from which the people draw their water is by tradition ascribed to Roman hands. A Roman tombstone with the inscription still intact and

easily legible, though in three pieces, had been built into a wall. It was erected, it said, by somebody in his own honour. The usual courses of timber were laid very regularly, and recalled a form of construction often seen in old-fashioned cottages, especially north-west of London. The snow on the mountains lay only a mile distant as the ravens flew, and a persistent rain somewhat interfered with our comfort. We were having a meal when it first began



BEE-HIVES AT EL BAALI.

to pour, and our host sent a man forthwith upon the roof to stamp it down wherever there was a sign of leakage. This order was so faithfully carried out that we received in our soup, not a shower of rain, but a very considerable fall of mud. However, it was all in the day's work, and on the whole we liked ourselves at El Baali.

The inhabitants were for the most part rather big, stout men with hearty manners and cheery laughs—the kind of men one slaps upon the back, but takes care to avoid

having the compliment returned. These brawny shepherds had leg of mutton fists. They not only did not object to being measured and photographed, but used to jostle each other good-humouredly for priority. We really enjoyed our work at El Baali. Whether intentionally or no, one man came with the barber and had his head shaved close to our house. Naturally we pounced upon him as soon as the knife was off his head and photographed him amid shouts of laughter, in which he joined. This periodical (it is only periodical) shaving of the head is a serious matter. Soap is practically unknown, so a little mutton fat and warm (or cold) water are rubbed into the patient's head. Sometimes the barber has a razor, more often a sharp knife, and with this unpromising material he produces in the space of a few minutes a perfectly clean, bald, shining, scalp, without a cut or abrasion anywhere to be seen.

El Baali is on the road to everywhere from Menaa, and not far off we met a family bound for Wed Taga. It comprised the father, several sons, and three or four women, who were riding astride of mules, clad in all kinds of garments, the prevailing notes in which were scarlet, orange and blue. Tiny donkeys carried the children, the chickens, the kids, and some of the goats. One even tripped along with no heavier load than a puppy, whose parents, great yellow sheep dogs, trotted alongside. One of these dogs was nearly slain by Fox, for what cause we did not inquire; probably our worthy hound was suddenly seized with the desire to kill something, which did credit to his English extraction. The usual way of securing luggage on the back of a mule is to fling a strong net over the top and make all taut. Sometimes the nets have other uses. One, for instance, was used to keep together a rude, round shelter in the fields, from which the owner could keep an

eye upon his crops without being unduly exposed to the inclemency of the weather. There are, in Kabylia, very many similar shelters serving also as barns, but this was the only thing of the kind we saw in the Aurès.

With the exception of the slight leakage above referred to our own room was excellent. It felt quite cavernous, and was appropriately dark, but as the rain continued steadily, a huge fire was built outside, and when the smoke had somewhat subsided, the glowing logs were removed and laid in a heap at the foot of the divan on which we slept. Hassen and the Kaid and their friends played cards all the afternoon, using what they considered to be French numerals, among which occurred *souj* (two), *cuatro* (four), *otto* (eight), and others unrecognised in any grammar at least of the French language. The card party was rudely disturbed towards sunset by the entry of a cow and calf which were driven by an old woman down the steps into our cavern and through a door into another just beyond, wherein dwelt the whole family of the Kaid, domestic animals included. Though the kindling of our own fire had been so carefully carried out, the pile of green, damp wood in this next room emitted so dense a cloud of smoke that as we sat mending holes in our clothes on the divan we were nearly choked. Amongst the many other amusing points of our apartment was the fact that the door failed by some six inches to stretch across the doorway. It was hung in a socket at top and bottom, not on hinges; Chawia doors are rarely hinged, and when they are it is due to foreign influence.

When asked about the snow in winter the Kaid pointed to the narrow alley between our house and that opposite, which would be about four or five feet deep (the remainder of the internal height being obtained by excavation or by

the natural fall of the ground). "The snow," he said, "fills that in the winter." The eaves project somewhat more than usual here, about a foot in all, and the edge of the roof is further protected by a six-inch course of big stones. A few chimneys were built of rocks and could be (and were) closed at the top for the sake of extra warmth by a piece of sacking and a boulder.

The head of the Abdi valley did not present many new geological features—at least at El Baali. Only the eternal ridges and walls of what we had come to call the "*Portes de Fer*" formation abounded on every side, interspersed with beds of fossil cockles. The cultivation is carried on either with or without terraces. At one point they extended nearly halfway up the hillside like the rows of seats in a theatre. Crowning all was a large white mosque with a minaret built like a watch-tower, which purpose, in former times, it had doubtless often served. The only paths up these terraces are fortified with steps of wood, over which hang mighty walnut-trees ready to make an Absalom of the rider who fails to guard his head. Corn grown off the terraces looks miserable in the extreme.

The Aurès is a land of curious mixtures and surprises. One night at Chir we went to sleep with the wailing of a mad marabout in our ears. The next we dozed, listening to the shouts of *cuatro* or *otto*, or whatever else it was, which marked the fact that Hassen was playing cards, and that he had just received a bottle of Pernod, for which he had sent a special messenger to Lambessa.

CHAPTER VII

WED TAGA

The Question of Roman Influence—A Bad Track—A Mysterious Personage—Ploughs—Bou Homar—Timegad—The Firis Valley—A Cañon—A Disappointment—Omm el Ashera—Berber Courage—Couscous—A Favourable Impression—Among the Holm Oaks—"Les Braves Boers"—Hassen and his Family at Home—Clothes and Equipment—Cavaliers a Necessity.

THE path from El Baali to the Wed Taga is worse than any other in the Aurès. We found it ankle deep in slimy mud, amid which round stones secreted themselves, so that even a mule had hard work to hold his own. The ilex scrub gets lower and more miserable to the head of the pass, where it ceases altogether, its place being taken by dwarfed ashes, at present nothing but bare, grey stumps. The few scattered homesteads also share the general appearance of poverty and wretchedness. One has no wall in front, only a back towards the coldest winds; another has only half a roof; in the valley, at the very source of the spring, was a tent of skins—similar in shape to those of the desert Bedawin. Here, too, the Administrator pitches his tent in the heat of summer, the country abounding in game, and good water being plentiful. Fox knew the spot and rushed hither and thither investigating places where he remembered to have put up hares or jackals or partridges.

The Romans evidently occupied the valley of the Abdi in some force. At its extreme limit were the squared stones of a station. Perhaps the road from Menaa and the south towards Timegad and Lambessa passed by here, and the warlike character of the mountaineers necessitated extensive military precautions. Some people have endeavoured to see among the Berbers of the Aurès a strong strain of Roman blood. Doubtless there is Roman blood in their veins, it would be absurd to deny it, just as there is Arab blood; but the quantity must be infinitesimal for many reasons. The Roman colony of Menaa was almost certainly not earlier than the time of Commodus, even Timegad and Lambessa were founded well within our own era, and not completed till the Empire was tottering to its fall. Long before the legions tramped down the Wed Abdi and left their outposts in their wake, the soldiers had ceased to be purely Roman, or even principally Roman. Germans, Gauls, Britons, Syrians, and a host of alien peoples had recruited their ranks wherever a legion had been quartered. A Roman legion stationed in Africa was doubtless composed of various nationalities, in which, the longer it stayed, the larger became the native element. What is probably true of the soldiers is almost certainly true of the colonists. In the times of the late Empire the population of Italy did not emigrate. Never in its history had it been in the habit of leaving its *panem et circenses* for the unknown, save under the compulsion of grave military necessity, and even so the "colonies" were chiefly confined to the soil of Italy itself. The "Roman citizen" of the Empire was anything and everything. There shared the honour of being able to say "*Civis Romanus sum*," freckled red-haired Teutons and Kelts, dark Iberians, yellow Mongols from the Black Sea, copper-coloured Egyptians, black men from the Soudan. All

these and more might be gathered together beneath the Eagles; of such materials were composed the thousands of "Romans" said to have been massacred in Colchester and London by the savage Icenî. The pure Italians would be in a small minority. A few wealthy civil servants and contractors built their villas, and, as an eminent authority has stated, kept themselves alive in our inclement climate by the aid of hot-water pipes. Now Britain was almost as important a granary as Africa, and it was in full Roman occupation for three hundred years. The Aurès, a poor, outlying district of the latter province, a barrier between the coast and the desert, was certainly not under Roman influence for more than half that time. It was, in short, the Scotland of Africa, and we need not expect to find more traces of Roman blood in the burnous-clad Berber than we do among the canny Keltic wearers of the kilt. The numerous ruins of Roman farms in the Firîs valley near Timegad tell the same tale. They correspond to the half French dwellings of the civilised Berbers near Tizi Ouzou or Constantine. They cease abruptly where the mountains begin—just where the Roman influence ended, and even they are of such rough construction that their remains have been taken for megalithic monuments. There is one other point which tells against a large infusion of Roman or even of Arab blood among the Chawia. The Kabyles of the same original stock, speaking a dialect of the same language, have never in the whole course of their history owned any alien master till they met the French and fell before modern arms and modern military organisation. If one of the two Berber peoples certainly remains pure, and the other is found to resemble it so closely in physical characteristics (even after many centuries have parted them from one another) that their measurements are almost interchangeable, that is a pretty good argument for

the comparative purity of the other branch as well. The Chawia and the Kabyle cannot be distinguished by any physical difference save that of speech ; they are the same people, proud, isolated, uncontaminated by alien admixture.

There is a most unpleasant outcrop of rock on the pass above Wed Taga. The strata being almost vertical, the limestone is worn away unequally into a thousand points and ridges which stand up like knives in the path. It seemed almost impossible for our mules to negotiate it, but they did, apparently without inconvenience, and we met many others, some staggering under loads of hay which only needed to be deposited on the ground to form respectable stacks where they stood. There was nothing at the top but juniper bushes and ground sodden by snow only just melted. Away in the far distance the mountainous waves culminated in a billowy mass higher than the rest—this was Chellia, but too distant and too rounded to form the prominent landmark which its seven thousand odd feet should entitle it to be. We had now left behind us the wilder and more interesting portion of the Aurès. In front were green, swelling ranges and fertile valleys smiling beneath the spring sunshine and the song of the skylarks. Acres and acres of young corn lay stretched at our feet. A red-tiled homestead surrounded by poplars spoke of European colonisation. A dozen rude Chawia ploughs were working slowly backwards and forwards, relieving the monotony of green with reddish squares and patches.

The scenery was no longer relieved by cliffs of red sandstone, marbles, conglomerates ; it was just a plain rolling limestone country, innocent, for the most part, of trees ; fertile and warm in summer, desolate and cold in winter—such a country as we see in the chalk downs about Salisbury, only bolder and on a larger scale. A few wild flowers began to appear.

There was something mysterious about the occupant of the red-tiled French house in the valley. Hassen said an Englishman lived there who hated both French and Arabs, and consorted entirely with the Chawia. Our curiosity was at once stimulated, and we proceeded to investigate—contrary to the advice of the Turk, who evidently knew his man. We rode up to the door of the courtyard; outside was a huge dung-heap on which a number of negro and half-caste lads were sitting lazily in the sun. Was Mr. — at home? They would see. No, Mr. — had gone to Lambessa on business. We missed our lunch: our hearts had been set on the prospect of a good colonial welcome and a European meal. However, the mystery remained unsolved. The owner was at home all the time, we heard afterwards. He was not an Englishman, but, like Kipling's hero, whoever he was, he had "turned three parts Mussulman and one Hindoo," and was better known than respected by his neighbours. Hassen always afterwards referred to "that swine there," and expressed the opinion that he was neither French nor English but something quite impossible to repeat, a near relation of the Evil One into the bargain—all of which we felt for some time afterwards to be both just and true, for a rebuff on an empty stomach rankles more than any other kind of incivility.

We passed quite close to one of the ploughs which was turning up the unknown's land. It consisted of two principal parts—the handle and share of one piece of right-angled wood ending in a blunt point, and a pole, to which two mules were attached. The pole and share, if we may so speak of that portion where a share should have been, were braced together by pegs and a couple of cross-bars. It was even more primitive than the ancient Egyptian plough and had apparently quite a different origin. Lower down, the valley was covered thickly with

flocks of sheep and goats, and a fine stream of water issued from a rocky cleft in the side of a hill, supplying power to a mill and refreshment to the crops.

We arrived ultimately at Bou Homar, a small and rather squalid village built partly on a recent landslip, partly on the cliff above it. The kaid, the most important in the Aurès, was a very fair man with mild blue eyes and a kindly expression of countenance. For the



A CHAWIA PLOUGH.

third or fourth time we met the two *gens d'armes* whose footsteps we had been dogging ever since we left Bouzina. Hassen, especially, rejoiced to see them, as he then had some one to keep him in countenance when he drank.

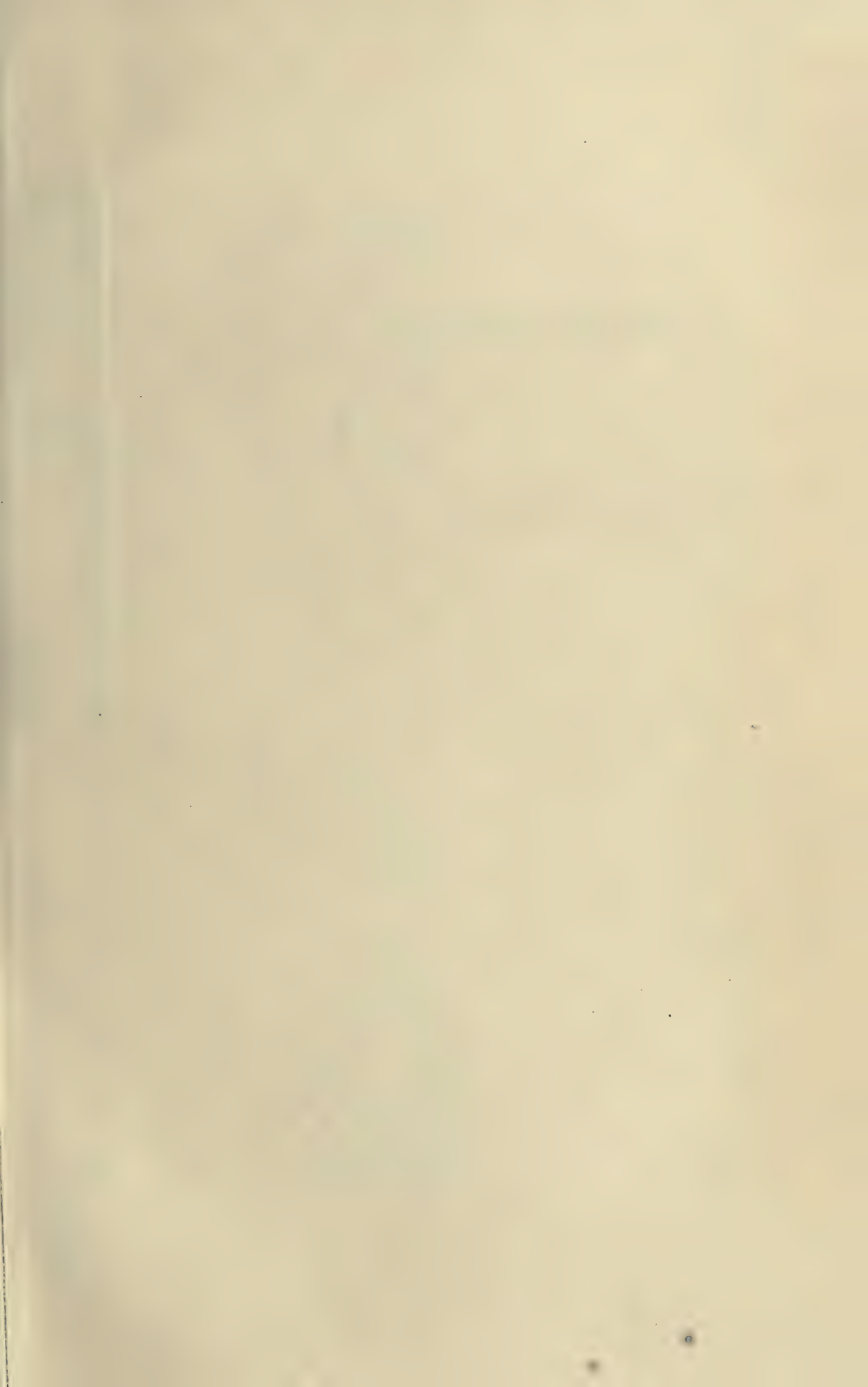
We had already been six hours in the saddle, or rather on the sack, and the backbone of a mule is often a very prominent feature of the animal. However, it was essential to save as much time as possible, so, after a hurried meal, we started with fresh beasts for Timegad, which was only

some two or three hours away. The country got poorer and poorer in appearance. It became covered with sheets of rock, amid which we thought we detected veins of iron-stone. The little streams that bubbled from the strata in all directions were stained with that curious ochrey appearance seen in iron countries. Presently we came out into an alluvial plain with scanty corn interspersed with charlock in great abundance. Reddish orange anemones, as small as they were pretty, added a new hue to the scheme of colour. Poppies, pink, white, and mauve, dotted the plain with little points of delicate and fragile beauty. The alluvium accumulated during long ages by the Firis and its tributary streams was seamed and furrowed with watercourses already dry, though there had been heavy rain the previous night, and as these wadys were often twenty feet deep the mules had plenty to do in taking us into and out of them. The rider on these occasions must not be idle. In the absence of stirrups, it is always rather difficult to avoid coming over the bows, and the best thing to do is to roll the tellis in front as if it contained a swag, the knees then get some sort of purchase when proceeding down hill. When ascending a steep gradient it is often necessary to hold on by the mane—never, as some people habitually do, whether climbing or not, by the reins, for if they do not break under the strain, the bit is so severe that a cruel punishment is inflicted on a generally willing beast—a punishment it will sometimes resent in a manner more lively than pleasant. A mule is not so silly as a horse, and it needs far more humouring.

Timegad was somewhat of a disappointment. The town is a very late one, and the architecture, of which a good deal is in fair preservation, is proportionately debased. Nevertheless the Algerian Pompei is well worth going a long way to see, if only because it is probably the most

complete Roman colonial town in existence. The Government spends from forty-five to fifty (we were variously informed on this point, but the sum is at any rate sufficiently generous to teach us a lesson in England) thousand francs a year on excavation and reconstruction. It is a pity that it does not confine itself to these two legitimate objects. As it is the triumphal arch—perhaps the finest building in the place—is in danger of being restored out of all recognition, like the Roman bridge at El Kantara. The French frequently err as much in this direction as we too often do in the other. They renovate according to their ideas of what should be there; we neglect without any ideas at all. Both processes produce the destruction of ancient monuments. The Arch of Orange is an instance of the one, the Roman Wall of the other. What they want is a less feverish desire to make everything level and symmetrical. What we want is a few hundred pounds a year spent on preserving what is and on excavating what might be. If a poverty-stricken country like Italy can spend money on such objects, surely the wealthiest community in the world might spare the few sovereigns necessary, for instance, to rescue Silchester from the plough, for at present the excavators are obliged to cover up the results of their labours as soon as they have plotted them and to leave the finest site in the country half forgotten and wholly buried, till a less economical age arrives, because it is wanted—wanted to grow turnips. The remedy is not far to seek. If any other deserving cause receives money it publishes a long list of names and subscriptions and the prosperity of that cause is assured. Why should not Archæology do the same? In speaking of Roman ruins a Latin quotation is permissible—*Bis dat qui publice dat*.

Just outside the Roman Timegad is a massive Byzantine





TIMEGAD.

fort whose curtain walls and towers have suffered little from the hand of man or from the gentler violence of Nature. But why this fort? Were not the Chawia Romanised and Christianised? Would they attack their own people in the city? The fort answers these questions. The mountaineers were neither Romans nor Christians, and the aliens of the valley feared them. Soon we were ambling, as the ancient colonists ambled, over a broad, roughly-paved street with side-walks and chariot ruts just as they were fifteen hundred years ago. On the right were the baths—an enormous building whose floors are still covered with mosaics and tiles; beneath, is a labyrinth of furnaces and flues and pipes. The conduits that supplied the baths with water are still in place; there must have been a mile or two of them, for the source is at that distance. On the highest part of the city stands the Temple of Jupiter, of which two great columns alone remain erect, admirable rather for their size than for their beauty. Forests of smaller columns and pillars rise from the lower town. In the forum are some with a Byzantine spiral decoration. The theatre is almost perfect. Tiers of seats built on the hillside, stage, doors—all are there, but the only audience that ever sit in it are the directors of the works, the only actors that grace its stage the semi-tragic, sabot-exalted members of a "Company of Discipline." We met the commandant of this hopeful band. He was a very short, vivacious little man who requested, as a personal favour, to be photographed beneath the towering mass of the triumphal arch. There he struck a heroic attitude and we photographed him. The result is certainly very comic, and we hope he is as pleased with it as we are. Unlike Pompei, Timegad has yielded little which sheds any light on the life of its former inhabitants. The shops are there, the bodegas are there, but no traces of the wares or

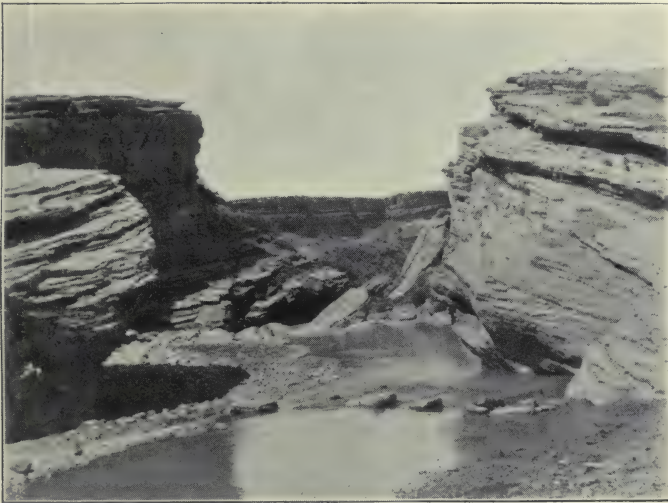
the amphoræ that delighted the hearts of the citizens. Of art there is even less remaining. No frescoes and wall paintings, no worthy statues, no marble fountains and pavements speak of wealth and refinement. Timegad would seem to have been an eminently respectable bourgeois township, and there is something peculiarly appropriate in the fact that it has fallen to the lot of the third Republic to excavate it.

The houses are all built in the same way as those at Barika, with rubble walls, strengthened about every six feet with big squared blocks of stone, some of which were over a foot in diameter and six feet high. This weak-looking form of construction runs through all the Roman remains we saw in the country. The museum at Timegad is exceedingly poor, and there is nothing in the objects which it contains or in the statues that stand outside it to demand more than a passing notice.

Bou Homar on our return was in a state of some festivity. A marriage had been solemnised and the village spent most of the night in letting off such guns as the Government had permitted it to retain. Judging from the fact that some of the reports were as loud as those from a seven-pounder gun, the weapons from which they issued should be pretty efficient, for if they fired two drams at times, at others they fired more like half a pound. It was pitch dark and beginning to rain, so we saw nothing. Bou Homar (Father of a Donkey) recalls a celebrated marabout whose ass was his inseparable companion. Similarly in Egypt and in all Arabic-speaking countries we find such picturesque phrases as Father of a Cat, Father of Terrors, Son of a Dog, standing respectively for a saint who had a pet cat, the Sphinx, and any person to whom the speaker has a dislike. Perhaps the neatest of all these phrases is "Father of Promenading" for the

water-wagtail. The vines in the valley below the village contained a mule's skull. In a clump of fig-trees scarcely one was without this charm against bad luck. In the village itself was a stone enclosure whose entrance was marked by a horse's head, the hives within protected by the lower jaw. Again we could get no other explanation than that these relics were there "for luck."

The whole of the valley of the Wed Taga and of the



ENTRANCE TO A CAÑON.

Firis is full of scattered blocks which mark the sight of Roman farmhouses, now engulfed in a sea of green corn and maize. The road to Omm el Ashera passes a hundred of them, climbs the hills that bound the valley, and there are no more till it reaches the village of that name. But before this it passes through a remarkable gorge in the limestone. At the entrance is a mill and the river forks—the left-hand stream marks the track. At few places is the gorge more than a hundred yards across. Often the

hillsides are sheer precipices rising to a hundred or two hundred feet in height. If a section could be taken straight through the mountain—and the stream makes nearly such a section—we should find that the strata form a gigantic arch from side to side. As one enters the cañon against the stream, which falls somewhat sharply at this point, the strata, dipping with the water but at a greater angle from the horizontal, produce the illusion that the stream is flowing up hill. Similarly at the other end of the gorge the apparent steepness of the descent is so much increased that the water looks as if it ran no more briskly than treacle, while in reality it is leaping and scurrying along at five or six miles an hour. The scenery within the narrow defile is a welcome change from the monotony of the country outside. The grey cliffs stand up boldly with heavy shadows among them as the sun wanes. Bushes of hawthorn and wild rose straggle across the already narrow path, making it advisable to walk slowly and delicately. Higher up the usual scrub reasserted itself, and Chawia houses occupied here and there a sheltered nook. Tents, too, were pitched by the watercourse with numbers of the inevitable cattle and goats browsing at their doors; big dogs meanwhile threaten every passer-by, but Fox, as usual, was a host in himself, and, having told them all to come and do their worst, walked by on tiptoe with his tail waving defiance.

We emerged from the gorge by a regular gate in the rock wall, over the threshold of which ran the stream, clear and strong. Close by, in the shadow of the cliff, a Chawia family—as is often their custom—had pitched their tent for the summer. Women were beating and treading wool in the way already described and made no objection to being photographed—they never do when their husbands or fathers are not in sight, for, like most people,

they are vain enough to prefer being handed down to posterity through the medium of a faded print or a casual illustration, to not being handed down at all. The vanity of the European is what an Oriental always tries to play on, for he judges—not incorrectly—that human nature differs less than external details of skin colour and clothing. Similarly, a European who knows his men will never neglect to flatter most outrageously the officials and



IN A CAÑON OF THE AURÈS.

authorities with whom he is brought into contact. It is hard, sometimes, to tell a man with a serious countenance that you rely on his well-known honour and probity; it would be harder still to express adequately what you really do think of him; wherefore, of the two evils choose the lesser.

The country to the south of the gorge of the Firis is pasture land—rolling down covered with fine velvety turf such as the sheep delight in. Looking backward, as we advanced to the next series of mountains and another gorge,

the entrance of the cañon seemed like a clean cut made by some giant sword in the swelling surface of a dome. We had come to look for dolmens and "snams" at Omm el Ashera, and, as Hassen did not know of their existence, we secured a local shepherd boy to guide us to the "Roman stones." We chuckled inwardly, for we had reason to suppose we were on the track of a real Stonehenge and expected to be able to teach Hassen something he did not know. Presently we came to the stones. They were Roman. Languidly we got down from the mules cursing softly, picked up half a dozen pieces of rude home-made Samian ware in as many yards and threw them away in disgust. Once again had we been fooled. We consigned all Roman remains to the middle of the Sahara. It was of no avail to ask the boy whether he knew of more such monuments. He repeated that there were none others at Omm el Ashera, and though we offered a franc a site he could not help us. There was nothing for it but to make the best of a bad job. We measured the ruins, which consisted of three quadrangles side by side, and sat us down to dinner. The standing stones were nothing but the strengthening blocks we had noticed at Timegad; between them were the foundations of the rubble wall, in some places easily visible above the grass.

In the background the mountains rose with grand sweeps and curves, many of them cultivated nearly to the summit like a Javanese volcano; the air was so clear that the ilex and juniper bushes with which they were crowned were distinct the one from the other at what must have been nearer five than two miles—true, they were not growing very close together; still such clearness was remarkable even in this dry climate.

As to the village of Omm el Ashera itself, it lies in a cleft in the rocks little less picturesque than that of El

Kantara. The stream is the easiest highway through it, a pretty purling cascade overshadowed by the usual blossoming orchards. The sides go sheer up several hundred feet and end in jagged promontories and chimneys through which the white clouds swept softly and moistly, warning us of impending rain. Only thirty years ago the French fought with the Chawia at Omm el Ashera and thrashed them soundly, so that all the mules in the district were



RUINS OF A ROMAN FARM—OMM EL ASHERA.

commandeered to take away the wounded to their sorrowing villages, the dead to their last resting-place upon a neighbouring hill. It was the artillery, said Hassen, to which the Chawia ascribed their defeat. The shells were too much for their nerves, and they went home sadder and wiser men.

From what we saw of both Kabyles and Chawia we agreed that, though on occasion they might be fierce, it was doubtful whether their ferocity was equalled by their courage and tenacity. That they (or anybody else

with the least pretensions to bravery) should fight well behind entrenchments was not surprising; but the history of many sieges in which handfuls of French colonists, men, women, and children, have repelled their assaults and only succumbed to fire or famine, does not incline the reader to form a high opinion of the "dash" of an always superior investing force. A Berber might work himself up into a short-lived frenzy, but his inability to combine with his neighbours under a common leadership, and to pursue a common offensive policy as the best means of defence, has made it impossible for him to hope for more than a temporary success against any considerable body of steady regulars. Speaking in general terms, which are always dangerous, the French histories of the Algerian revolts leave upon the mind an impression unfavourable to native valour. The Touareg—half Berbers, half negroes,—have proved themselves more capable soldiers and worthier foes, for, though the Sahara fights for them, so do the mountains for their northern fathers.

Bou Homar carries the cult of couscous to a degree of refinement unknown elsewhere. Not only has it two kinds, a dark and a white, of which the white is much to be preferred, such as only the richer villages of the south can show, but it has a special rope and pulley in many chimneys—good stone-built chimneys—to supply the hungry on the roof. Whether hanging in a sooty cavity improves the flavour, or whether it can be really dried over a wood fire, the fact remains that when at sunset the elders of the Kaid's household have turned towards Mecca, have prayed with many prostrations and muttered passages of the Koran, and have at length resumed the discussion of the latest scandal, the couscous pot is hauled up the chimney and the contents eagerly devoured by those who have not the privilege of dining with the visitors.

M—— had purchased at Batna various articles destined to be given to kuids as a souvenir of our visit. Up till now we had nearly always left a piece of paper (there is no gold in the country), and with this they were well satisfied. But here our host was a different sort of man altogether, and he accepted a cartridge belt as a small recognition of our indebtedness to him. So pleased was he with the present that he forbade any of his servants to take a penny from us for anything they had done. In short, we parted with the best of good-will on both sides. I leave it to those who have some experience of the East to imagine how favourable an impression this Kaid, by his refusal to allow us to be exploited, either by his family or by his people, had created in our minds. Human nature nearly always argues from the particular to the general, and one such incident will often determine the traveller's verdict on a whole people. A single grasping individual will ruin the character of a village. On the other hand, a single act of stupidity, one piece of folly or meanness, will ruin, in the eyes of the village, the character of all Europeans for years to come.

From Bou Homar to Lambessa is only a ride of three or four hours through the most splendid forest-country, where even the monotony of the ilex has a certain charm. Mile after mile of hill and mountain, plain and plateau is covered with holm oaks—now in large clumps, now in dense, impenetrable thickets through which the light of day scarce penetrates. Glimpses of blue mountains and far-off streams flashing back the sun among the shadows of the forest, a few cedars and junipers, a patch of asphodel, of scarlet anemones, a breath of air from the distant snowfields, all these things, though viewed not once but twenty times in a journey through the Aurès, combine to make the scene as pleasant as it is unlike all other

scenes, either in Algeria or elsewhere. Here and there are ruins of Roman farms—perhaps of oil-presses too—though nowadays there is never an olive to be seen in this part of the country. Close by ran the great road from Timegad to Lambessa, just as the French road between the two places passes now. We presently found ourselves upon this road, the first and last in the Aurès, as well kept, as white and smooth as if it were within



REMAINS OF A ROMAN OIL-PRESS NEAR LAMBESSA.

ten miles of Paris. A few carriages pass along it to Timegad or to Arris, to which latter place it is not yet completed; a few Chawia drive their herds by it from pasture to pasture, otherwise it is deserted—a monument of splendid waste, from the civilian's point of view. As a military road, the one road by which heavy artillery could penetrate into the fastnesses of the Aurès, it is probably a success. At Arris are a colony of White Fathers and a hospital—the latter badly wanted, for the

Chawia are not a very healthy folk. We heard the country was fine, Chellia overtopping all the mountains round. Moreover, the White Fathers are always very hospitable and glad to see a Western face. Arris is a place to see, but he who is bent on science cannot pick and choose his road while time and funds are in general equally limited, wherefore we had to leave Arris unvisited.

Lambessa wore a very different appearance now. The lilac-trees were coming out, filling the air with scents of home. Almond-trees had put forth pink flowers, inviting the treacherous night-frost of the mountains. It was a late season, they said. It certainly should have been, for the vegetation cannot have been much in advance of that of the south of England at the same time of year. We left Fox in the charge of his master, and Hassen accompanied us to Batna. While we were waiting for the vehicle some boys, just out of school, seeing we were English, tried to draw us on the subject of the Boers. They evidently thought to make us angry, but instead, to their no small discomfiture, we professed ourselves as anxious to hear all they could tell us—we had had no news for weeks. It is unnecessary to add that they knew nothing of what had happened or was happening in South Africa. Their parents had told them the English were being beaten, and that was all they knew or wanted to know. And that is an attitude of mind which is to attract English visitors to Algiers, to turn the stream of tourists from Egypt, the tide of commerce from Gibraltar. Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad.

Three Chawia ladies of Lambessa, the wives and daughter of the corporal, the hire of whose mule had made him a richer man, travelled in the carriage with us to Batna. They were going to take the baths, which the state of their faces and hands would seem to have demanded for some

time past. Hassen, with his usual gallant manner, was paying them considerable attention when his own wife and son passed us in a smart dogcart. His discomfiture was only momentary. Would we come to his house and photograph his family? The chance was too good to be missed. We went, and found ourselves at last enabled to secure portraits of Chawia women. Hassen's wife was the daughter of the Kaid of Arris. Her sisters and mother were enjoying Hassen's hospitality. His brother-in-law, a great dandy, took coffee with us. It was a happy little family so far as we could see, the more so as a male infant had recently been added to it, and we left our guide philosopher and friend a wealthier and a prouder man—one eye upon his offspring, the other regarding with no less solicitude a bottle of absinthe.

The luggage with which we had started our Aurès expedition had been considerably reduced already by the necessity imposed upon us of sacrificing all available old garments for the proper packing of the pottery collection. The problem already presented itself whether we should have to adopt burnouses to hide deficiencies in our attire. The corporal's mule—we took the mule right through with us in case of accidents and in order to make it up to the corporal that he had not been selected as our cavalier—had a backbone sharper than any cow, and no amount of patching and darning would ever again render respectable a pair of trousers with which it had been in close contact for a few hours. We just managed to make things last as far as Lambessa and Batna with not another stitch possible anywhere. While on the subject of clothes I would say to any one who wishes to visit the Aurès any time before June: take the same things as you wear in England all winter. Do not indulge in any fancy dress for riding, because, in the first place, there will be no one to admire

you, and in the second, you will probably find gaiters and boots (to say nothing of spurs) with the water running out of their tops a very serious drag when you have nothing to put your feet in. If you are very short you may, with comfort, get a toe each side into a corner of a *tellis*, but for a tall man it is easier to ride with no stirrups at all than with his knees above the level of his hands. The best things to wear are flannel trousers, and have a pair in reserve—a burnous is always available if the worst comes to the worst. Have a light pair of shoes for riding, or your booted legs will ache abominably after eight or ten hours. If you wish to walk much—this is not to be recommended for social reasons—have the stoutest hob-nailed boots you can lay hands on. Above all, be well provided with blankets, for you will rarely find bedding, and remember that you will have to sleep in your clothes every night and only get a wash when you can find a spot where the Chawia women do not draw water—otherwise there will be trouble. To a man who has led a temperate life and is not very apoplectically inclined the sun of Algeria presents no dangers. A slouch hat is on the safe and elegant side, anyway, though an ordinary cap will answer just as well with the peak on the back of the neck when the afternoon sun becomes unpleasantly warm on this the part most open to attack. By no means be bothered with helmets, umbrellas, razors, or the like. Such things only add to the weight, and every pound, after a certain point is reached, is a consideration. A flannel belt or a thick cummerbund (such as is worn in Queensland) is an absolute necessity or you will have chill after chill and perhaps an abcess on the liver, the nearest doctor two or three days' ride off and only couscous to keep yourself alive until he comes.

There may be fever in some parts of the Aurès, but,

speaking generally, all the malaria has been cultivated out long since, and typhoid is the only remaining enemy. If you are afraid of this and are in a typhoid village, have a billy and see that your water or milk is really boiled before you drink it—tea is the most convenient thing to take, but you will find the natives regard it as a luxury and the supply should therefore be carefully husbanded. The wine imported by the kaid is, almost without exception, quite undrinkable. Do not



A "CAFÉ" BY THE WAYSIDE.

even taste it, therefore, and you will escape a nasty mouthful and acquire a reputation for obeying the precepts of the Koran. A mackintosh cape is useful and takes up no room. Flannel dries directly in this dry air and is about the healthiest, lightest and least expensive form of clothing. All linen is best left at Batna. The Administrator at Lambessa, or we were much mistaken, is not the kind of person to judge a man by the height of his collar or the amount of his cuffs. Firearms are quite

useless and very inadvisable. There are a few things to shoot, but not enough, I fancy, to make it worth anybody's while to take a shot-gun, which would probably be stolen on the first opportunity, through the customs and into a country where the game laws are very different and very much more complex than they are at home. *For many and obvious reasons, no English lady who has not already roughed it in a Mohammedan country should attempt the Aurès ; and the same objections apply to Kabylia if it is proposed to stay with the kaid in the native villages.* At a place like Batna or Fort National there are fair hotels—but thus far and no further.

The visitor to the Aurès must first apply to the Sub-Prefect at Batna for a letter to the Administrator at Lambessa, authorising the latter to provide him with a "cavalier." Without these preliminaries few persons will find themselves comfortable among the Chawia. They may be, from the native point of view, thieves or vagabonds. To the Government they will be objects of suspicion and distrust, and they will be lucky to escape summary ejection from the district. Do not, therefore, give unnecessary trouble to kaid or *gens d'armes*, to the Administrator, or, least of all, to the long-suffering British Consul at Algiers. The pride of independence is often dearly bought—in few places more dearly than in the Aurès. Wherefore, in Rome do as the Romans do, put a tooth-brush in your pocket, a suit of spare flannels on a mule, and you are ready to interview one of the pleasantest men in Algeria—the Administrator of Lambessa. All the "cavaliers" are good—like master like man—but some are better than others, and any one who secures Hassen ben Mohammed the Türk will return with an improved knowledge of French, a memory of pleasant scenes and mild adventures, and a cordial liking for the Aurès and their Berber inhabitants.

CHAPTER VIII

CONSTANTINE AND ROUND ABOUT

Country Round—Situation—Flowers and Trees—Eucalyptus and the Climate—Jews—Bou Merzoug—*Tellia Apoda*—Dolmens—*À bas*—Hamman Meskoutine—The Hot Springs—The Gardens—Ride to Roknia—A Rough Country—The Making of a Dolmen.

IT is not my intention to write a guide-book, but only to record the things we saw and experienced. It will not, therefore, be necessary to detain the reader with a long historical sketch of Constantine copied from the work of a more worthy author, and I shall therefore only allude to such bald facts as every one who visits this interesting town cannot help getting to know.

A fall of between one and two thousand feet in our elevation produced a wonderful change in the temperature. Constantine was respectably warm, and we were able to discard our winter clothes for the first time since leaving Cairo, and this although during the three or four days we made Constantine our headquarters it rained and blew in a manner worthy of an English spring. The country round this picturesque town is virtually part of the high plateaux, and, when left to its own devices, quite as barren and uninteresting. However, as far as the salt lakes towards the south, and for miles in the direction of the port of Philippeville, the land has been planted carefully

with many kinds of trees, and a fair number of colonists have settled down to grow corn and wine. Still, even now, the Arab may be seen here and there with tents and herds, eating up the good soil and cutting down the last remnants of the forests. Until these lazy outcasts are moved into the Sahara, Constantine as a province will never attain its full measure of possible prosperity, but, unfortunately, the French are more anxious to get rid of the Jews than of the Arabs, and if they succeed in doing so it will be many generations, if ever, before the country recovers from the shock; for it will have lost the only capitalists and business men who, by force of circumstances, at present interest themselves in its welfare; but of this unsavoury subject of Anti-Semitism more anon.

It is useless to describe the delights of a bath, the stuffiness of a bed and bedroom, the questionable joy of again donning a "boiled" collar and shirt. All these things are known to travellers, and to those who do not travel are matters for wonder rather than perusal. Yet the pleasures of living in a rough country are never adequately realised till one has lived some while again in civilisation; the pleasures of civilisation are only appreciated after an absence in the wilds, and they, in their turn, quickly pall.

Constantine, the ancient Cirta, long the capital of Numidian princes, was only captured by the French after disastrous fighting. Its situation is probably as grand as that of any town in the world, and, under the conditions of ancient warfare, it constituted a fortress impregnable to every foe but treachery. It is half surrounded by a natural moat—the magnificent gorge of the Rhummel, never more than a few hundred feet across, and of a depth of which some idea may best be conveyed by the fact that in it natural arches some two hundred feet high are completely

dwarfed by their gigantic surroundings. The public spirit of a citizen of Constantine has turned the gorges into a pleasure-garden. Numerous narrow paths wind in and out of the tunnels and arches by this almost subterranean stream, while bridges span the tawny torrent like the



GORGE OF THE RHUMMEL—CONSTANTINE.

threads of a web, conducting the visitor to fresh scenes of grandeur at every corner, to baths cut in the living rock, to glimpses of blue sky and cloud far above, where, at a height of a thousand feet above the stream, the red-roofed houses of the town hang upon the edge of fearsome preci-

pices. Deep in the gorge are the remains of numerous Roman bridges, leading from roads since lost, to paths up the cliff wall, long ago buried by *débris* or quarried by the frosts of winter and carried far away by the river. On



NATURAL BRIDGES IN THE GORGE OF THE RHUMMEL.

one of these two elephants are rudely sculptured, by the hand of one who evidently was not familiar with his subject, for their hind legs are represented like those of a horse, with prominent hocks, whereas, as is well known, the elephant's limbs present the opposite peculiarity. Of

the modern town there is little to say. The streets in the Arab quarter, where the tanneries overhang the gorge, and defile the air, if not the water, are steep and narrow like those of Algiers; neither present any remarkable feature to those who have seen even such an Eastern city as Cairo. As to the Frankish houses they are tall and white but not inspiring, and in many of them an air of squalor proclaims that the tenants into whose hands bad times have thrown them are often Arabs, rather than the Europeans for whom they were built.

Good roads and diligences, to say nothing of the railway, will convey the traveller whithersoever he wishes to go, but few sights are more depressing than a French colonial hamlet, and if he is well advised he will confine himself to drives in the outskirts of the town before proceeding to Tunis, or Biskra, or Algiers, as the case may be. The red soil about is covered with vineyards; it produces in profusion roses and geraniums. Willows and ashes, limes (pollarded after the French fashion) and acacias shade the avenues. The acacias were not yet in full leaf, but the willows thrive everywhere and especially along the banks of a winding mill stream, in which some horses were immersed up to their noses, seeking to avoid the attacks of a newly awakened world of insects. Arabs were picking strawberries on the hillsides, or exercising their horses for the impending races. Fine beasts they look, these horses, but they would never hold an English thoroughbred for more than a few yards, and they stumble, at all times, most abominably. Many of the riders were asleep on the ground after the manner of Arabs, and their faithful mounts were sniffing them like dogs in search of something edible. Of course there are poplars at Constantine, but the aloes, cypresses, gum-trees, and prickly pears strike a different note. These two last abound—or, rather, did

abound—around Constantine. The eucalyptus had not been introduced much more than seven years in this part of the country, and already magnificent groves of these quaint yet graceful trees had grown up as if by magic. Last winter came the snow—heavy and deep. It blocked the railway not once nor twice, and trains had to be dug out. It killed every gum-tree and every cactus for fifty miles around. All are bare and dead, and the groves are littered with the sawn limbs and logs of young giants who have thus disappointed the hopes of those who have striven—not without success in less bleak provinces—to acclimatise them in a strange hemisphere. These trees come from a land which contains a British population, good part of which is nearly four generations old, and a population which has begun to count itself by millions. Constantine was too cold for the trees of this land. How shall the French say that Algeria is too hot for them and for their children? After all the doubt is not universal, but, so long as it exists, we cannot be accused of being the only people who are ignorant of the mighty movements that already begin to alter the ethnology of the world.

In the valley, a mile from the town, is part of an aqueduct built by Justinian, of great, roughly-squared blocks, piled together without mortar. It is a building of more strength than elegance, as might be supposed; there is, however, nothing finicking about it, and it might very well be several centuries older than it is.

The higher hills around are a blaze of colour in the spring. A squadron of cavalry, exercising, the men in white jackets and red overalls, made a poor show beside the golden masses of marigolds, yellow and orange; deep red poppies, mallow, campion, borage, thistles, charlock, and half a hundred others of our familiar flowers, covered the ground with a luxuriant carpet in which every shade

of the rainbow was represented. Dwarf iris, pimpernell, asphodel, and wild mignonette were only some among a number of plants which were less common—though even of these a handful could be picked in a few minutes. For the lover of flowers Algeria would be a paradise. Such masses of colour are rarely seen in England. Sometimes the fields of clover give us wonderfully broad sweeps of crimson, alternating perhaps with a poor cornfield, yellow with charlock; but not often is there anything here to compare with the sight of a mile of hillside ablaze with marigolds and the deep blue sky behind.

The so-called Corniche road was thronged with Jews going to the hot baths, where they spend their Sabbath afternoon in dancing, and bathing and sipping anisette. The men wear European dress very commonly; but some also the Turkish trousers and fez. The women, who are decidedly pretty when not too buxom, part their long hair in the middle, have fresh faces, and indulge in all sorts of coloured bombazine dresses ranging from sky blue to yellow, but the commonest shade is pink. As many of them are quite fair, and few have the "new-saddle" complexion necessary to carry off such strident clothing, they do not perhaps appear on such occasions to the best advantage. A more orderly, clean, decent-looking set of people it would be hard to find. Our driver told us—he was half a Maltese himself and not a rabid anti-Semite—that they are obliged to go thus in dense masses to the baths for fear of the Arabs. This is a point I shall have something to say about later on. In passing I may remark that we noticed for ourselves the men always to the outside, and though the people were merry, it was with a constrained sort of merriment such as those indulge in who feel themselves watched and on sufferance.

From Constantine we went on three snam-hunting expeditions, and had better luck than at Omm el Ashera. The first of these was to Ouled Rhamoun and the spring of Bou Merzoug. A typical valley of the country was this: flanked by the brightest of green hills, filled with lush meadow grass and shaded by pollarded willows and limes in which colonies of storks had their nests—storks standing on their homes in meditation, storks flying, storks picking diligently beside the stream for the luscious frogs with whose croakings the twilight was alive. The keeper of the refreshment-room at Ouled Rhamoun was an English publican who had been born in the wrong country. Prosperous, genial, and apoplectic, he and his wife made us free of their best. We drove up the valley to the spring of Bou Merzoug—a hot spring this, and chiefly notable as the home of *Tellia Apoda*, a little fish without ventral fins which is found nowhere else in the world, and, says the guide-book, never strays more than half a mile from the source. We set all the available Arabs to catch some specimens, but, as the publican's wife had justly remarked, they were "*vrais petits coquins*," and refused to be taken. Meanwhile we took a shepherd boy to carry our apparatus and went to see the dolmens. They cover the hill for miles, in hundreds, if not thousands. None were of such remarkable size as Kits' Coity house in Kent, but dolmens they were, and we spent a busy afternoon with the measuring-tape and camera. The Romans had apparently had a small bath-house at this spring, but the Romans did not build the dolmens, for we found at least a quart-potful of chipped flints, black with exposure, and one almost perfect flint arrow-head.

We went back to Constantine the same night in a third-class carriage already tenanted by some four soldiers and a due proportion of civilians. We thought the former

were drunk, for, seeing us strangers, they had invited us in, and in we went hoping at last to find an adventure. We did not find an adventure, but we had an experience such as falls to the lot of few. For an hour we heard those men, still in uniform, abuse the army, the generals, the Government, their country. No word was too bad, no expression too foul, to apply to anything and everything that was French. Yet we two Englishmen alone remonstrated, it remained with us to do what we could to defend the institutions of a foreign people to its own children, to its professional defenders, while they for their part declared their intention of turning Boers! It was a dramatic situation, and a disgusting situation, but withal interesting, and so I record the facts as they occurred. Not a Frenchman in the carriage but sympathised with what was said. One only qualified the curses with some experiences and recollections of his own. These soldiers, it seems, were just released from prison, where they had spent most of their three years' service, and were on their way, first to France, they said, then anywhere—in France they would not remain. What their faults had been we did not learn—insubordination was what was hinted at. They did not look criminals: their faces—scarcely yet bearded—were the faces of weak, but not of specially unprincipled, men. We thought the system that had found them nothing better than the weary routine of prison life might not have been blameless. But what is one to say to a state of mind that allows men to hear every national ideal, every point of their national honour, dragged in the mud, without protest, without contradiction, only with tacit acquiescence and the half encouragement of smiles? In any other country these soldiers would not have dared to so express their feelings, on pain of being mobbed if not of being murdered. But here the audience knew it all before them,

and that strange scene had only awakened in their breasts the cynical compassion of men whose own wounds were but half healed with the long lapse of years.

Another day of snam-hunting—this time up the line towards Guelma. Shortly after leaving Constantine the train slowed down to a snail's pace and crawled across a bridge high above a stream. It had been like that since the snow melted, and the bridge was not strengthened yet. We thought unspeakable things until it was safely passed. At night the train goes over at a brisker speed. One day the train will not arrive, and then, perhaps, the bridge will have to be repaired. The country was at first open down intersected with willowy water meadows, lush grass, and scanty crops of corn. Presently it grew bolder. Near Djebel Thaya are caverns in the limestone hills that no one has yet properly explored, and here we entered a narrow defile with rocky sides studded with golden broom, *jujubier* scrub, and white cistus, down which a torrent rushed, not tawny or clear, but blue-green, probably with magnesia from the mountains. Olives presently appeared mixed with ilex—in the distance the trees are almost indistinguishable; the whole country was like a portion of the Alban hills to which the glories of the African sun had added a fresh element of richness and beauty. The strata were in some places perpendicular, their jagged edges adorned with banks of flowers of every hue; the guelder rose, the oleander, the ash, and yellow mimosa flourished amid tall groves of eucalyptus, which had here escaped the fate of their comrades at Constantine.

At Hammam Meskoutine (the Accursed Baths) we left the train, and passing through a fine clump of blue gums presently arrived at the hotel of the thermal springs—known and frequented by sufferers from all kinds of diseases at least since the Roman occupation.

The springs offer a picture only comparable to the late pink and white terraces of New Zealand. The water, heavily charged with carbonate of lime, falls over a precipice of considerable height, the face of which it has covered with a beautiful deposit of glistening white and gold. It is in fact a petrified waterfall, and above it the steam from the boiling springs hangs in dense clouds against the summer blue. At its foot are olives and gum-trees. All round the springs are numbers of what are apparently white ant-hills, from five to nearly twenty feet in height. These are the cones of extinct geysers; whose force, having spent itself in one direction, finds outlets in many others, for the soil is alive with jets of steam, and the air foetid with the odour of sulphur. It is from these cones too that Hammam Meskoutine derives its ill-omened name. The native legend is as follows : An Arab had a sister of such beauty that he hesitated to make her the wife of another man, and with the concurrence of his relations and friends he at length decided to marry her himself. But Allah looked with displeasure on this violation of the laws, human and Divine, and turned the wedding party, one and all, into pillars of stone, which stand there as a testimony to this day. The hotel is really an enlarged farmhouse, and we saw no place in all Algeria at which the hospitality of the owners or the beauty of the surroundings would make it more agreeable to take up one's abode. The garden is resplendent with flowers ; the scent of orange and citron blossom pervades the air. A huge tree—a false pistachio—overhangs the front and makes a welcome shade beneath which to lie, listening to the busy hum of the bees, or abandoned to the contemplation that the balmy air induces, of other scenes in other climes where the orange blossom smells as sweet, and the hibiscus, the banana, and the coconut have assumed the *rôle* of rose and apricot and



THE PETRIFIED WATERFALL AND HOT SPRINGS AT HAMMAM MESKOUTINE.

vine. A Roman altar stands in the shadow of the tree, a panel of graceful sculpture turned towards the house. All around are fragments of fountains and sarcophagi, indeed there are few souls to which this spot would not appeal. Even the sportsman will find partridges in plenty, and wild pig in the neighbourhood, and will hear of jackals, even perchance of lions, for between Guelma and Bône there are still a few of these animals who have escaped, till now, the



ROMAN REMAINS AT HAMMAM MESKOUTINE.

fate that goes with the onward march of civilisation. The country through which we rode to see the dolmens of Roknia is sufficiently wild to harbour any number of lions, but there is a reward on their heads, and any one who shot the king of beasts before the Arabs did so would have achieved a miracle.

As we lunched in solitary grandeur—the hotel was on the point of closing for the summer, all the guests being gone—we asked for mules. The waiter said it was

impossible to do it in the time with mules ; we should have to stay the night. Much as we should have liked to do so our time was too valuable. Therefore, seeing us in a quandary, the proprietor was good enough to let us have instead of mules the horses from the 'bus. With their aid and a guide similarly mounted we rode the twenty-four kilometers to Roknia and back in the afternoon, and had ample time, not only to measure and photograph the dolmens, but to eat the excellent dinner provided for us. We forded a river and lost ourselves in the *jujubier* scrub on the way—the track having been washed off the hillside by the heavy rains. There is no snow at Hammam Meskoutine, and said everybody, "no winter." That perhaps is an exaggeration, but at least a spot where bananas grow out of doors and the springs are at the boiling-point throughout the year must escape the extremes of cold to which less favoured baths are liable. The marigolds and poppies surpassed even those of Constantine. They were magnificent—like a carpet of cloth of gold and rubies laid upon the hillside.

As to the dolmens, they had been a good deal disturbed by casual visitors, but enough remained to satisfy our desire to see what manner of place it was from which General Faidherbe so many years ago took skeletons and ornaments of bronze. We also found a piece of rough, wheel-made pottery, which might belong to almost any period except the most ancient ; but whatever may have happened to the ground since they were dragged into position, the dolmens themselves are obviously of great antiquity. No Roman remains made from similar stone and exposed to the same conditions in the same locality can show a tithe of the weathering of those strange monuments of the prehistoric Berbers.

At eleven o'clock that night we were again in Constan-

tine. Nine hours' rail and three or four on horseback, besides a two hours scramble about the dolmens, made together a creditable record for one day.

Of our third search for snams at Bou Nouara I need say nothing, save that it was well rewarded by the view of a magnificent stone-age necropolis, untouched apparently by Roman or Arab or French road maker. Arums and purple poppies abounded among the barren rocks of which the



A DOLMEN AT ROKNIA.

dolmens had been made, and a curious orchis resisted identification. One point about the dolmens and cromlechs was clear—how the huge covering slab had been got into position. The tombs are all on hillsides where the strata lie in flat masses already partially disintegrated by the action of water. The side walls were first erected—not a difficult task, as the stones used were comparatively small. Then a slab of the rock towards the upper side of the structure was raised on edge, probably by wooden levers,

and allowed to topple over into the desired position. There was no mystery about the making of these stone monuments. They at least will never provide material for circle-squaring, Great Pyramid and lost-tribe worshipping, cranks who see a mystery in everything except their own existence—the greatest mystery of them all.

The time had come to enter upon the last stage of our journeyings in Algeria—to take the train for Bougie and for Great Kabylia.

CHAPTER IX

WED SAHEL AND TAZAIRT

First glimpses at Kabylia—Bougie—Akbou—Wild Flowers and Trees—Among the Hills—Our Quarters at Tazairt—The Language—The Village—Houses—Wood-carving—"Suk"—The Café and our Tea—Courtesy of People—The Missionaries—A Street Preacher and the Kabyles—White Fathers—Silver—Oil Mill and Press—Wild Beasts—Our Market and a Discovery—Measurements—The Future—Social Intercourse.

BBROWN ghosts of gum-trees haunted the track for many miles to the west of Constantine, but a few showed by sporadic signs of shoots that we were leaving behind us the area of the heaviest snow-fall. At all the stations these trees have been carefully pollarded, and sorry specimens they look—as well pollard a birch-tree or a Scotch fir. Besides these hapless gums not a tree is to be seen for many miles. The Arabs have burnt most of them, their goats have eaten those that escaped. Bordj-Bouarrerdj looked warmer and more attractive than when we saw it last, still we were glad that we had not that ride from M'Sila to Barika once more before us.

At Beni Mansour the line forks. To the north is the Bougie branch, which passes by the lovely valley of the Wed Sahel to the sea. Sahel means "coast"; the "Sahel" wines are celebrated throughout the country—they are less nauseous than the others. The coast lands are the finest

in Algeria. Here are the villages of the Kabyles, crowning each peak, except the highest, on which the snow yet lingered, with white-washed, red-roofed villages. All the coast mountains were theirs before the rebellion of '73. Then the Government seized the opportunity to provide the colonists with something better than the leavings of the Berber agriculturists. Many of the smaller and more prosperous communes date their foundations from this period.

Cheek by jowl the villages of Frenchmen and Kabyles stand. The first with its white one-story red tiled cottages and church, the second with its white one-story cottages and mosque. They do not intermarry : they have nothing in common but mutual distrust. They will not fuse. The Frenchmen only employ the Kabyles to work for them, and they, having made their fortunes, retire each to his own place, where, having bought the girl of his heart to wife, the prodigal returned settles down to a life of peaceful industry, the selfsame life, for the rest, that his father and grandfather and his ancestors have lived since first the missionaries of the Prophet turned them from their former idolatry. Before the Frenchmen the Kabyle never owned any man as his master. Disastrous experience in plenty has not yet taught him that he is really subjugated ; one day he will make another effort to shake off the yoke, but the time is not yet, and in the meanwhile as the years go by the progress of railroads and *chaussées* make his chances of ultimate independence more than ever remote.

Bougie is the natural seaport of this rich region, and it should have a considerable future before it. Built on the last spurs of the Djurdjura, the little town—almost more Spanish than French in appearance—looks down into one of these all too rare harbours of the African coast. It is a

sunny blue cove with mountains at the side and back—such a cove as the Carthaginian and Phœnician merchants would have chosen wherein to beach their ships while they traded with the least ferocious of the neighbouring tribes. Until quite a recent date the Kabyles of this coast were wreckers and pirates, as are still their Riff cousins in Morocco—not aggressive, perhaps, on a large scale like the famous Rovers, but still ever inclined to plunder whatever fortune brought upon their shores.

Bougie itself has had a history as chequered as any town on this much-conquered coast. Probably, though we have no record of it, the Punic merchants knew the place. After them came Roman, Saracen, Spaniard, and Turk, and all of these have left traces of their occupation. Finally the French have striven to make the place commercially worthy of its position by the construction of a new harbour. Walls, citadel, and forts are replete with antiquarian interest, though so mingled are they with barracks and modern works that the visitor would do well to have a care as to what he sketches or photographs. Indeed, a short walk from our excellent hotel brought me, camera in hand, face to face with a sentry and a modern gun mounted in an earthwork overlooking the harbour. I withdrew with some inward trepidation and as much outward indifference as possible, but it is hard to look like a simple tourist when you have been consciously (though involuntarily) playing the spy. Possibly the excellent sentry was a good deal amused, but he said and did nothing as I withdrew myself and the camera with an apologetic expression intended to represent innocence. At Bougie can be hired carriages and mules to go anywhere into Kabylia, but for those who intend to live amongst the people and not simply to pass through the villages *en route* to a French town, it is better to secure a "cavalier" in the ordinary way, by the authori-

sation of the Sub-Prefect at Bougie and the Administrator at Akbou. Such an authorisation will allow the traveller to see the Kabylia of Bougie, and will take him to Michelet on the Fort National road. After that the country is so often visited by strangers that he will probably require only a guide from his hotel.

The temperature of this pretty town was a welcome change. The air, loaded with the scent of orange blossom, the balmy evening resonant with the shrill clamour of cicadas, had a velvety feel about them which was conspicuous by its absence further inland. Bougie, in short, has a warm, moist climate where snow at least is unknown, and where it is easy to fancy oneself upon the threshold of the tropics. In the summer it should be well supplied with mosquitoes, and the extensive groves of eucalyptus at the adjacent mouth of the river suggest that fever was at one time not unknown.

The Sahel valley is one of the finest pieces of scenery in the country. To the east are ruddy hills dotted with olives, to the west the gigantic snow-capped masses of the Djurdjura. In the middle runs a considerable river, flooded with melting snow at the time of our visit, often a quarter of a mile wide, and full of mud and shingle. This river—useless for navigation—being too swift and shallow at one period of the year, an almost dry bed at the other, is ever bent on invading the fertile lands of the colonists. In one spot it has swept away a vineyard. In another a water-meadow is represented by six feet of yellow foam. A hedge of cactus and geraniums has been transported half a mile down-stream and there left high and dry with a top dressing of clay and boulders. Still there are many substantial farms with red roofs appearing amidst avenues of date-palms and gum-trees. Roses bloom on every porch ; mimosas, aloes, cacti, and olives grow luxuriantly.

The valley at night is filled with the croaking of innumerable frogs. Palmetto scrub together with broom and juniper and oleander make a fair setting for the thousand brilliant flowers of the upper reaches.

At Akbou we slept (or attempted to sleep) one night in a small and not very clean *auberge*, where the little pigs ran in and out of the café to the great scandal of such Muslims as partake therein of sundry sirups and *apéritifs*. We received a "cavalier" from the Administrator, and made arrangements to start for the eastern bank of the Sahel. The cavaliers here were by no means polite either collectively or individually, so that it gave us great pleasure to train one of them at least in the elements of civility and usefulness. There was a shade over Akbou. One of the older colonists, one of the fathers of the place, was being buried, and every one seemed to share in the general depression. The abrupt change of climate to Bougie, and thence again to the sides of the mountains, had not agreed with us, and we lay one afternoon beneath the shadow of the gum-trees, glad of a chance to admire in peace the lovely panorama beneath us and to indulge for once the "tired feeling" produced by an unaccustomed climate and the prospect of a further period of couscous and tough fowl.

Our new cavalier was rather a stupid Kabyle, with red hair, brown eyes, and a freckled complexion. He grinned continually, and was incorrigibly lazy, but we found him sufficiently honest and useful when once he had learnt his work. It was again a country for mules, and with three of these animals we left Akbou on its hills and descended into the valley. For some miles we kept the main road, passing through scenery such as has been above described—olives and groves of eucalyptus, then, as the population became sparse, acres of palmetto scrub, juniper, and golden broom

with twinkling cistus in the darkest thickets. Fields of golden marigolds and tall pink gladioli interspersed with ox-eye daisies brought us over the river and left us at the foot of the mountains on the eastern side. The track now became very steep and rough, and the character of the country changed completely. Enormous numbers of olive-trees covered the hillsides, relieving the red soil which ploughs, little more advanced than those of the Chawia, were turning over, with patches of black shadow. The ploughmen ran away when we attempted to photograph them, but the heavy oxen stood stolidly in their furrows among the olives with the blue snow-flecked Djurdjura behind them. Thus we ascended out of the valley ever up into the mountains with the clear sky and hot sun overhead, the olives and the cornfields stretching out below—up, past thickets of aloes in blossom crowned with mighty spikes, and cacti, through the dark beds of watercourses where the heavy green-black carob-trees stood festooned with huge pods and the oleanders were putting forth their delicate pale blossoms; up past villages, now embowered in almond blossom, from height to height, until it seemed that we must shortly reach the mountain roof itself. Here a mighty pillar of rock stood sentry over the precipices; there a wall of cliff was lightly terraced with waving fields of corn. A lark soaring in the illimitable blue vault of heaven sang free and clear of the new springtime; a hen fled clucking from a wandering jackal whose stealthy stalk we had disturbed. Each cluster of red roofs and groaning oil-presses as it topped the skyline seemed to occupy the summit, until a full score of hamlets crowning as many bluffs lay behind and beneath. At last we climbed wearily into Tazairt and alighted at the portals of the kaid's own guest-house. A surly kaid he was—almost the only one of his people we found otherwise than hospitable. Still

even he provided quarters which were better than anything we ever knew among the Aurès mountains. First, on entering, was a spacious room of stone flanked by stone divans on which the host and his retainers slept and lounged. A second gateway led to a courtyard occupied by rough sheds for the animals. A few forked posts supporting a number of unhewn beams on which the fodder was being laid to dry gave shade and shelter. Our bedroom contained two iron bedsteads covered with mats, the floor was strewn with matches and orange peel—the bequest to us of a previous tenant. Another room, above the entrance hall, was reached by a flight of rickety steps, and was surrounded by a narrow verandah commanding a glorious view of the surrounding villages and mountains. A door behind our bedroom led to another grass-grown court in which an olive-press creaked and groaned unceasingly.

Arski, the cavalier, was more useful than he had promised to be. He could cook an omelette, and he cooked it well. For the rest we had couscous and a piece of chicken twice a day, together with a handful of dates. It was impossible to secure anything in the shape of a breakfast; still a tin of tunny and the remnants of last night's bread, washed down with the scourings of last night's tea, sufficed to keep us, if not well, at least alive and hungry. The kaid was the only man in the place who did not seem disposed to welcome us—perhaps the gentleman who had eaten so many oranges, and strewed the peel about, had soured his temper for the time.

Tazairt is really a double, if not a treble, village, and the name of one of its parts, Ighil Ali, is perhaps better known in Kabylia. Ighil is often written Ir'il by the French, a spelling which suggests at once the similarity in sound between the Kabyle *ghain* and the French "r," especially

as pronounced by a Marseillais, or *grasseyé* by a not too well-educated Parisian. There is no real difficulty about the letter to an Englishman, once he realises that it is almost identical with his own "r" in the mouths of half the Frenchmen and Germans who talk to him. The Kabyles have also the Arabic *'ain*, which is generally so difficult to detect that one doubts its existence in ordinary conversation. There is also the "q" or "dotted k" of the Arabs, which imparts a curiously guttural sound to every word into which it enters. The Berber language has both our "th's," but the common folk confuse them with "t" and "d." Both grammar and vocabulary suggest far-off Semitic affinities, but Kabyle is from all accounts second only to Basque in point of isolation and difficulty. We now heard it spoken all round us, and, except for the fact that Kabyles do not generally enunciate with an aggressive manner, but rather in a pleasant sing-song, we might have passed it as a dialect of Arabic. In the Berber language all feminines begin and end with a "t" or "th," and as many place-names are naturally of that gender, it is easy by looking at a map of North Africa to form a good idea of the wide extension of the race. There is even a suspicion of the initial and final "t" in some apparently native names of places in the Canary Islands. However, it is easy to see such things when one looks for them in every part of the world, and desirable though it be to connect the natives of those islands with North African races, the problem has not yet been satisfactorily solved. There are a few differences between the Chawia and Kabyle dialects, but as we only heard the former spoken on rare occasions we were not in a position to decide whether they sounded materially the same or not. The Kabyles speak of their Aurès kinsmen as if they were half savages, and seem to recognise little more relationship with them than with the Arabs.

Tazairt was a fine specimen of the villages in the Kabylia of Bougie. Its situation, on a mountain-top, overlooking other mountains and villages, its horizon bounded only by the Wed Sahel and the Djurdjura to the west, and by the humbler peaks and crags of the ranges



A STREET IN TAZAIRT.

to the east, has been already indicated with sufficient distinctness. The three clusters of houses are separated by fields of green corn dotted, in park-like fashion, with olive-trees. The houses are all of stone—stone roughly hewn and knocked and chipped into position in a bed of

mud by the aid of a clumsy hammer. There are no wood courses in the walls, but where they do not support a low-pitched roof of red tiles they are crowned, instead of splintered glass, with brushwood and thorns held in position by a thick layer of mud. The houses are generally built so as to abut upon one another, and to form a continuous ring around the village, the gaps in the curtain being filled by the walls of courtyards and enclosures. This simple method of guarding the community from outside attack is further assisted by the extreme narrowness of the tortuous streets which pass constantly under covered roofs and through *djemaas*, and are commanded by various loopholes formed of tiles and disposed in somewhat picturesque patterns in the sides of the houses. The red gabled roofs offer another contrast to the flat terraces of the Chawia, and add as much to the colour of the scene as they detract from its human interest. In a few cases the walls were whitewashed; in some, rude arches, pointed and horseshoe, and colonnades, broke up the monotony of the stonework; in others, grass grew abundantly from the clefts between the stones; but nowhere was there any approach to the squalor and dilapidation so common in the mud villages of the Arab.

In addition to the crutch-like supports for the roof, which we noted also among the Chawia, the Kabyles make use of heavy timbers with forked tops, in which the rafters repose, if not so elegantly, at least with equal security. Chimneys were very common, and many of the public divans were paved with flat red tiles imported from Bougie. Two stories were frequent, the upper projecting a foot or eighteen inches as in old English houses. The doors were all of massive wood, on the folding system, swinging in sockets in the stone threshold and lintel, and often carved and decorated with evident attention to

the claims of art. The manufacture of such doors is conducted in one of the neighbouring villages. Tazairt also has its own industry—wood-carving, especially of model arms and implements. Formerly this was a centre of the manufacture of real guns, knives and swords, the steelwork of which was inlaid with brass, but now that the French have beaten the sword into the sickle, the artisans are obliged to content themselves with making copies in wood



MOSQUE AND CEMETERY AT IGHIL ALI.

of the weapons of their ancestors. Two or three curious maces were shown us, which might perhaps have been imitated from Spanish mediæval arms captured by the Kabyles at Bougie. Less clumsy, short-stocked, wooden guns, and some halberds appealed more to our antiquarian than to our æsthetic sense. A model of an oil-press was very well executed—it now reposes in the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford—and its designer was engaged on a wooden copy of a French tea-service which he was inlaying

with tin. This man had sent specimens of his work to the Paris Exhibition, and we found many others who had done the same, and who excused themselves on this ground for their lack of something more suited to our collection. We found ourselves soon after our arrival in the market-place, with the "suk" in full swing. A number of little tents and booths afforded protection from the sun, which had at last begun to make its presence felt. A large gallows occupied the attentions of a small crowd of men with sheep and goats. From it were suspended the still warm carcasses of skinny victims, and the earth beneath, saturated with blood, formed a happy hunting-ground for the village dogs, who dragged long strings of offal from one hiding-place to another, each more anxious to deprive his neighbour of his meal than to brave the indignities showered upon him by the butcher in attempting to secure one for himself.

Naturally enough the café was full of men playing cards and dominoes, and sipping the thick, black, well-sugared liquid which, alas! is unknown in England. Coffee prepared in true Eastern fashion is to English breakfast-coffee as liqueur brandy is to *vin ordinaire*. We used to send our tea to this café to be boiled. First we sent it in the billy with the water, then we sent it in a separate parcel to be added when the psychological moment arrived. We sent it in various ways and with various directions, but never did we receive aught in return but a quart of a tawny solution of tannin. Whether the frequenters of the café preferred tea to coffee, or whether the master of the house and Arski together sampled the tea too freely before it arrived, we found it impossible to reconcile the results obtained with the reputation for unspotted honesty with which Kabyles are usually credited; and the hint was by no means wasted.

In all our peregrinations through this interesting village we were accompanied by a little crowd of children, chiefly boys, and we were much struck with the quietness and courtesy of our escort. There were no noisy references to foreign riff-raff, no clamorous demands for bakshish, no pushing and swearing such as one encounters among Arabs. Instead, there was every sort of polite attention. One boy, on hearing we wanted to see the wool prepared for spinning, guided us to his home, fetched his old father, who condescended to show us how it was done, and how to make the necessary instruments, and, at last, was more than satisfied by being shown the view-finders of a hand camera. If it had not been the case that we found just the same native politeness in all other Kabyle villages with two exceptions (and these, of course, where tourists penetrated), we should have been inclined to ascribe it to the influence of the White Fathers, who have established themselves in Tazairt.

The missionary problem is one of the greatest difficulties which the French Government has to grapple with in its dealings with the natives. On the one hand, after the last war and the subsequent pacification, the Kabyles were promised that their religious observances should not be interfered with; on the other, it is, if not impossible, at least very impolitic, as things now are, for a European Power to prohibit to any section of its subjects such intercourse with the natives, secular or religious, as does not openly conduce to a breach of the peace.

Nevertheless, well-intentioned, well-doing, as the missionaries in Algeria undoubtedly are, they form a constant source of irritation to the people among whom they live. They may, and do, educate many of the children, nurse the sick, comfort the dying, but their converts can almost be counted on the fingers of one hand, and the balance

between religious gain and secular loss is a very fine one. On the whole we thought more harm than good was done, and all with the best and kindest intentions in the world. The following incident illustrates what I mean.

While we were living at Tazairt certain enthusiasts—not White Fathers certainly—arrived from the other side of the *Wed Sahel*, and dismounted from their horses at the *café*. They entered, and one of them, who, we were told, spoke Kabyle almost as fluently as a native, held forth for upwards of an hour on the advantages of Christianity and the inevitable damnation which awaited those who still clung to the Prophet. We were not present and did not hear of the visit till afterwards, but we had no reason to suppose when we heard Arski informing our venerable host at Gelaa of what had occurred that he had in any way misrepresented the facts or the words. They discussed these missionaries and their teaching in the same way as the majority of Englishmen would discuss a street ranter—perhaps with a greater allowance for good intentions. They neither blamed nor censured nor criticised the doctrine. They repeated the cant phrases—we could hardly help smiling to hear them, so accurately had Arski mastered this peculiar system of oratory—with every appearance of amused compassion. They were not so much insulted as grieved to find that Europeans should think so ill of them and their religion as to take the trouble to come and talk what seemed little more than nonsense for the space of an hour, and then ride away as abruptly as they had come. Now to any one who knows anything at all about the elaborate theology of the Mohammedans, about their endless discussions, their clever casuistry, and the importance they attach to reasoning and argument, it is not a little wonderful that any person in his senses should hope to evoke any but a

derisive response to a discourse held after this fashion. What surprised us was not so much the fatuity of the proceeding as the dignity and the dry humour, far removed from levity, with which it was regarded. But the exponent of Christianity must really, when dealing with such men, adopt a tone which will appeal to their intellects rather than to their sense of humour, which is calculated to produce in the long run contemplation rather than contempt. In this case ill-timed enthusiasm had missed being irritating by being funny; but, whether irritating or funny, it is equally deplorable in its consequences.

We called on the White Fathers, one of whom was an Arab who had been "caught young" as an orphan; another, who received us with much hospitality, had seen twenty years of service in different parts of Africa, mostly in the vicinity of Lake Nyassa and in Uganda. He claimed to have kept his health everywhere, and had formed a high opinion of the commercial possibilities of the latter country. To all outward appearance he was as hale and hearty as if he had lived all his life in France—which was perhaps to be attributed to the energetic life he had led, for White Fathers do not go about much, even in the tropics, in chairs carried by black men, nor spend their leisure in Singapore lounges almost too tired and limp to sip the drinks provided by a host of swarthy retainers. On the contrary they cultivate the soil with their own hands, write their own grammars and dictionaries, and very often print them themselves on the spot. Here in Ighil 'Ali they had a fine garden already garnished with useful vegetables and planted with thriving young gum-trees, and two good, substantial houses, parts of which were devoted to the education of the Kabyle youth. The sisters of the mission we did not see, but to judge from

analogies elsewhere they are doubtless as active as the male portion of their little community. I may add that almost the only good wine we tasted in the country was made by the White Fathers.

The small girls were often very pretty, and some of



KABYLE CHILDREN.

them wore silver ornaments and talismans, most of which latter seem to have been taken from the Arabs. It is a moot point whether the Berber has any native charms against disease and the like, but we inclined to believe that there were such things, though their owners could or

would give no certain account of their uses. As to the silver ornaments, they resemble very closely those of the Chawia. The patterns and designs are almost identical, insomuch that it would be impossible to tell with certainty whether a given bracelet were made at Menaa or Tazairt. On the whole the Kabyle silver is somewhat heavier and more ornate, and is more spoiled by the addition of lumps of coral and composition. Of their enamel I shall say



A SILVERSMITH OF TAZAIRT.

something in another place, but it too suffers from want of delicacy and taste.

It has been said that an oil-press adjoined our house. These presses are so common that a few words of description may be devoted to one of them. First of all there is the mill in which the olives are crushed. This mill consists of a circular bed of concrete hollowed towards the middle, so that the olives do not escape from under the heavy

millstone—a foot or so thick, and perhaps four or five in diameter, which turns on its edge around a central shaft. To a pole through this stone is attached a mule, which walks round and round dragging the millstone slowly about its own axis, over the concrete bed. The mule has probably a piece of sacking over its left or inner eye, so that it may not become giddy by regarding too closely the machinery.

Meanwhile a woman is gathering the dry olives in her lap from the mats on which they were laid and placing them under the millstone. A man keeps them always under the edge of this with a large wooden shovel, and pours a little water on them from time to time. When the olives are crushed they are packed into baskets shaped not unlike lobster-pots, only flatter, and these baskets are placed one above another beneath a screw press actuated by a horizontal lever. Most of the woodwork is itself of olive, and a huge flat wooden bowl, two feet six inches in diameter, made of single tree trunk, receives the oil as it flows from the trough or floor of the press, which also is of wood and of great size and strength. With a bailer and plaited funnel the oil is next ladled into a goatskin or a big green-topped earthenware jar, and is ready for sale. The olives already crushed and pressed are either used for manure, or, if a stream be handy, washed in a rock basin and the oil skimmed off the surface of the water. The aroma of stale olives and rancid oil is as characteristic of Kabylia as is the reek of couscous of the Aurès. Of the two, the nose is less offended by the product of the olive. The Kabyle olive mill is not unlike that still in use in Southern Spain, and it is possible that the whole system of producing oil in North Africa is derived from Roman sources, though the art of grafting is said to have been entirely lost, and the trees have deteriorated in consequence.

"Kabyle oil" has a great reputation throughout Algeria—chiefly, I think, because few olives are grown and little oil made by anybody outside the Kabyle country. In the Aurès nothing is known of olive culture.

We made inquiry as to the game of the country, and were, as usual, assured that though there were few wild animals near such a civilised town as Tazairt, there were lions near Bône and panthers in other places. The



AN OLIVE-PRESS AND MILL AT TAZAIRT.

Kabyles say that if you go boldly up to one of their lions and look him straight in the eyes he will decamp. If, on the other hand, you happen to catch the eye of a panther he will spring on you at once. Avoid, therefore, looking too closely at this latter animal. Wild swine are very common—many of them no doubt descended from the pigs which the pre-Muslim Berbers may be supposed to have herded in their forests, and fattened on the succulent acorns of the holm-oaks. Hares are there in plenty, and

jackals; one of them woke us up one night as he came pattering and sniffing after food into our quarters, and it was wonderful to see through how small a hole he had managed to squeeze himself. The Djurdjura mountains are peopled by baboons—similar to the famous denizens of the "Rock"—though said to be not quite identical. These animals frequent the higher passes and peaks, and even shower stones on the head of an intruder. The Kabyles do not harm them, holding them to be human beings slightly transmogrified by the wrath of Allah, and asserting that they do not plunder their crops and orchards. This seemed almost as unlikely to be true as the story of their origin, considering the absolute lack of anything more nourishing than halfa grass and pinsapo pine on the inhospitable snow mountains these baboons have made their home. Of bird life we saw little. A few crested larks and once or twice a hawk, or, in the far blue sky overhead, a speck that reminded us of the Egyptian vulture. Storks do not seem to frequent the higher mountains of Kabylia.

We held our usual market, directing that all objects of daily use should be brought which the owners wanted to sell. They made no pottery, said Arski. Well, they used it, we replied, and we wanted to see it all. By and by they came—grandfathers, fathers, grandsons, each with his jar or his crock, his silver bracelet or brooch, his carding machine or his spindle. The courtyard was crowded with several score of reclining figures clad in cream-coloured burnouses, many of which were in the last stages of dilapidation. The rickety staircase groaned beneath the crowd of hurrying vendors, but there were marvellously little noise and disorder (considering all things), and less horseplay than might have been expected. The long looked-for pottery at last arrived with a decoration so similar to that

found on Egyptian pottery of the pre-historic period, that a culture connection between the two stood revealed beyond the shadow of a doubt. If M—— and I had been Frenchmen we should have embraced each other. As it was, we refilled our pipes and over-paid the man who brought the pot. It was extraordinarily pleasant to have one object of our journey accomplished. After searching for such ware in vain in the Aurès we had begun to despair even of Kabylia, but now the future was rosy enough, so we puffed with great contentment, trying to look unconcerned, that the Kabyles might not raise their prices in honour of our discovery. It was easy to see that if we valued this decorated pottery so did the inhabitants of Tazairt. It was all brought miles and miles on mules across the mountains from the distant villages on the spurs of the Djurdjura, by enterprising traders, who took back with them the wooden carvings, burnouses, and oil of the Kabylia of Bougie. However, we bought all that could be spared, and, having refused certain very expensive and “anila” dyed carpets of designs similar to those of the Aurès, though lacking the camels and trees, we proceeded tentatively to broach the subject of physical measurements.

Though there was no great amount of alacrity in responding to the usual invitation, half a franc ahead produced a sufficient number of recruits. Of the people of Tazairt it would be hard to say more than that they were practically identical with the Chawia. Their features and colouring were so similar—though fewer blond men presented themselves for inspection—that their racial identity became immediately evident. Curiously enough, a grey-eyed “Arab” presented himself for measurement, and though we had little doubt of his Berber blood, it was necessary to reject him. Many of our new friends had quite English faces and figures. Some, again, were like

Italians or Spaniards. A few older men with thoughtful faces and fine, boldly hooked noses, might have passed for Jews of the best type. Again we had not the smallest opportunity of making any observations on the women, of whom we saw very few indeed in this village. These appeared to have black hair, but many of the children were quite fair, and there was nowhere any suspicion of the negro.

Tazairt in a few years will become thoroughly sophisticated. It is only an hour or two from the Wed Sahel, and but half a day's ride from Akbou. French influence is already to be seen in the introduction of bedsteads to the *kaid's* house, flat tiles, sweetmeats and wine, which will, in due time, become necessities rather than luxuries. A few weather-board houses, in one of which, however, was a fine specimen of a native loom, have been constructed on European models. There is no immediate probability that the people will begin to fuse with the invaders. They will work for a Frenchman, but they will not marry French women, nor will they allow their own daughters to marry Frenchmen. Religious differences are not so great a bar as might be supposed. There is certainly a sort of social difference between a colonist and a native in Algeria, the conqueror and the conquered, but it would be untrue to say that the Kabyles live more poorly than the peasantry in large parts of Europe, or that they are less susceptible to the influences of civilisation. Race hatred is at present master of the situation. Whether it will subside sufficiently to allow of the formation of a united Algerian people in the near future, in this century or in next, it is impossible to say. History is against an affirmative answer. The Berbers did not unite with the Carthaginians or the Romans or the Turks, but then, too, they were never conquered by them. Still it is doubtful whether a race straining under

the new yoke of foreign conquest is more likely to enter into the life of the foreigners than when it is still in the enjoyment of its former freedom.

A good-humoured little man—of a type very common in England—had helped to bring up recruits to be measured, for which service he had received three sous a head. We gave prizes of one franc to the men with the longest and broadest heads, and a similar recompense to the individual who overtopped his fellows. If I remember right even the giant was not five feet eleven, and the people may be said to be of medium stature. With him and others of his friends over the boiling pot of tannin after a supper of couscous, fowl, and red pepper, we had lively conversations on all sorts of subjects. The last evening a man wished to accompany us to the Paris Exhibition in any capacity we liked. It was always a matter of interest on these occasions to the Kabyles to learn the number of days consumed in travelling between Paris and Algiers or London and Bougie. Some of them had fair notions of geography; few were uninformed as to the international situation as it existed a few weeks ago. On the whole these conversations revealed less general ignorance than a similar inquisition would have shown only a few years since in most of the country pot-houses in England (I do not say Great Britain). They are not a strikingly clever people, but they have a full allowance of brains, and education will work wonders for the younger generation.

CHAPTER X

GELAA TO MICHELET

Tazairt to Bordj-Boni—Flora—Fine Scenery—Schools—Short Commons—A Hospitable Kaid—Kabyle Political Organisation—Soffs—Marabouts—Liberal Views—Purchase of a Burnous—Gelaa and its Surroundings—"Shadow Photography"—Ride to Akbou—Tomb of a Marabout—A Ford—A Jackal—Over Chellata—The Ash of Kabylia—Wild Scenery—Lanes—The Mountains—Michelet.

THE packing of pottery and other souvenirs of Tazairt and Ighil 'Ali had been an unusually severe operation. Damp forage and halfa grass made excellent nests for fragile articles, but boxes were always hard to find. However, everything was safely nailed down and dismissed under the escort of Arski to the nearest station whence it could reach Algiers. With small cases at two francs a-piece and grass at a sou a handful we had every reason to be careful, and the consignment reached England in about two months' time in an excellent state of preservation.

It was now time to shift our quarters, so bidding farewell to the kaid and his rather mercenary little son, we again found ourselves on the mule-path, still ascending, through the mountains towards Gelaa. The rivers were reported to be in flood, so we found it necessary to make a wide detour to the south and east in the direction of Bordj-Boni—one of the most picturesque places in all Algeria.

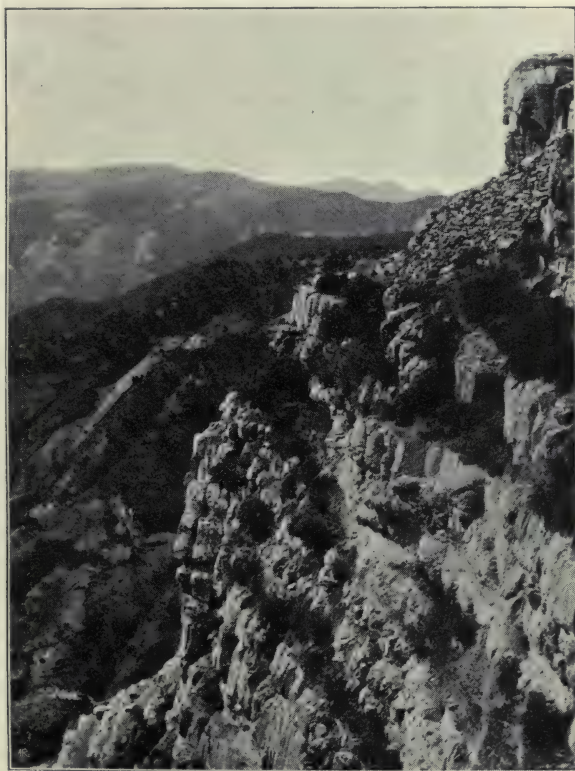
Our guide was a Mokrani—a member of one of the most influential Kabyle families, but his appearance was far from aristocratic. True, he had a high and sharp nose, but for the rest he was wizened and peaky-looking with shifty blue eyes and sparse, sandy beard and moustache. We remembered, moreover, that while he was undergoing the measurement of a not too remarkable head, certain strange animals that dwelt upon it had peeped forth inquiringly from his mud-coloured stubble as if to reconnoitre the intruder.

As the trusty mules breasted the zigzags along a road which would not disgrace any country in the world where carriages and carts are not in use, the mountains grew gradually more desolate. The olive groves were left behind and fig-trees succeeded them, soon, however, to disappear in their turn and give place to magnificent trees of hawthorn in full blossom a good month earlier than in the south of England. A carob-tree or two reminded us that we were still in Africa, but otherwise the mulberry-trees casting their shade upon banks of wild roses and sainfoin might equally have belonged to Italy. Amid thickets of jujube shrubs, gigantic brooms and cistus blossomed with gold and white and delicate shades of lilac and pink. Mallows, pimpernels, and the common wall penny-wort grew about the crannies in the cliffs. Vetches, wood hellebore, and an orchis, together with the so-called red valerian, struggled with us up to the top of the pass, where a forest of Aleppo pines and ilex lay spread at our feet. No sooner had we begun to descend amid the wild scenery that culminates a few miles off in the Portes de Fer than the watercourses began to be studded with juniper and oleander bushes. Blue-black clouds rolled up and cast long shadows on the green and violet sea of tumbling strata beneath ; thereafter came the deluge, to our no small dis-

comfiture ; but it proved to be only one of many passing showers, and the rugged magnificence of the scenery was, if possible, enhanced by the ensuing contrasts of inky cloud and blazing sunshine. Now and then we would encounter a Kabyle driving a pack-mule, his head shrouded in the cape of his burnous as he breasted the stinging rain-gusts that burst in fury down the gullies. An isolated village looked from its hilltop over the cornfields to the rugged masses of the Iron Gates towards the south. A cluster of stone-girt graves crowned the summit of a moor, and overhead the pine-trees sighed and murmured in the wind. These were the last resting-places of the sturdy mountaineers that held the Gates below there in the blue and distant valley. Speeding from their eagle's eyrie at Gelaa or issuing from the fastnesses beyond, these men were wont to line the heights above the pass that separated the Arabs of the west from their eastern kinsmen. In former days a foe would find the gorges bristling with arms, each boulder hiding a group of desperate men, each cliff prepared to pour upon him a veritable landslide from which there was no escape. For many years the various conquerors of Algiers paid tribute to Gelaa for safe conduct through the Gates. Even the Imperial message of Stamboul was nothing to the hardy Berbers of Eastern Kabylia.

Bordj-Boni is simply a block house in which accommodation might be found for a night, but the views it commands are not so fine as those around Gelaa, the track to which latter place is worthy of Switzerland, at least in point of scenery. The mountains close in more and more as the neighbourhood of Gelaa is reached. Enormous clefts and ravines sunder towering precipices upon which the pines maintain a precarious foothold. The wind from the snow-clad Djurdjura in the distance swept about us with something of Alpine severity as the mules picked their cautious

way along crumbling ledges or down boulder-strewn descents. The air is so clear in these northern regions of Africa that we could descry upon the scarred sides of the furthest peaks innumerable bushes of juniper and ilex. Twenty miles away the green valley of the Wed Sahel



IN THE MOUNTAINS NEAR GELAA.

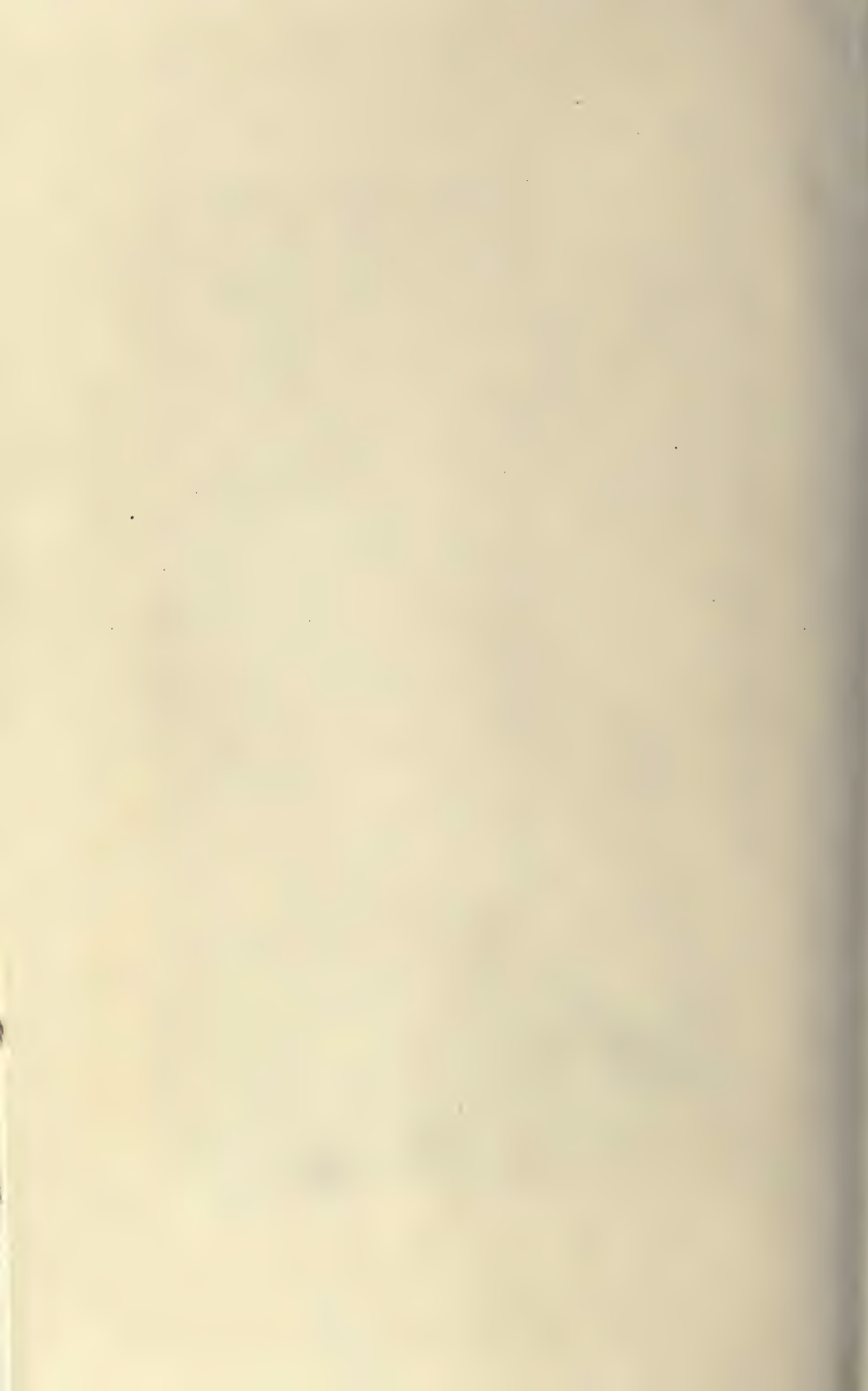
showed clear and bright. Not a sign, save this, of human occupation intruded upon the solitude of the wilderness. Gelaa was out of sight until we topped the last ridge, and then the full grandeur of its situation was not at first realised, so dwarfed was the three-fingered plateau upon

which it stands by the majestic surroundings. Yet Gelaa is at an altitude of more than three thousand feet above sea-level. Not without reason has it been named the "Fortress." It is a veritable Gibraltar—the strongest position in Kabylia. The western side that overlooks the tumultuous mass of smaller mountains towards the Wed Sahel is practically unassailable by infantry, unapproachable by cavalry, and almost impossible of attack by artillery, for few positions command it, and these are so difficult of access for heavy guns in a roadless country and so far from the objective that just these guns alone could reach it. We approached from the east over the mountain-top, but the invader who could reach that commanding elevation in the face of an active opposition would find the task as hard as if he scaled the natural ramparts to the west and burst at once upon the village. Gelaa, in short, has never been conquered by Roman, by Arab, or by Turk. It wisely did not withstand the French after they overran the rest of Kabylia.

The village is double, occupying two of the three fingers that the mountain puts forth into the lower country beyond. In each is a kaid, and, between, a modern school, with French masters, whose influence upon the juvenile population would seem to have been all for good. The Kabyles are more amenable to European education than the Arabs. Their instincts are in favour of whatever promises success in life. They inherit the ambitious spirit of free men from forefathers who expelled the Spaniards from Bougie, who built up, under the Mokranis, a little kingdom in this corner of the country. To-day they travel much and trade much in burnouses, the manufacture of which is the chief occupation of their women. Their fields are poor, as is natural at such an altitude; their herds are not so numerous as those of other villages; their olive-



PART OF THE VILLAGE OF GELAA.



trees are all in the valley below, for little, save the hardier forms of vegetation, grows upon the surrounding peaks. These Berbers live by their manufactures as their brethren by their agriculture, and their industry and intelligence are in marked contrast to the sloth and stupidity of the Arab nomads of the south.

We had started from Tazairt at six in the morning, after a slender repast of crusts and coffee. It was now well on towards three o'clock in the afternoon. We had thus been on the march for nearly nine hours, during which time we had been supporting ourselves on tobacco. Our dismay, therefore, may be imagined when, on dismounting at the door of the kaid in the upper village, we were informed with many apologies that the midday meal was long since finished, and that nothing more would be forthcoming until after sunset. The kaid, nevertheless, supplied us with a little bread and some dates, so that the pangs of hunger were for the moment stifled. Still Gelaa was bitterly cold, and, as we donned all our available garments and went out with the heir-apparent to see the town, we should have been but ill-pleased with our new quarters had not the courtesy and kindness of our hosts compensated for a lack of provender and the absence of the sun.

Short commons is the order of the day in this part of Kabylia, and, after all, we had less reason to feel hungry than the descendant of the Mokranis who had tramped the weary miles on foot that separated us from Ighil 'Ali and Tazairt. Few races can be hardier than the Berbers, and Herodotus said that none were healthier than the Libyans of his day. Their winters are severe, food is scanty and bad, fuel by no means abundant. Only clothing is tolerably warm. On the other hand, the summers are extremely hot and water often fails. Add to these seasonal changes the diurnal vicissitudes of temperature common to all mountain

climates, and it is easy to understand how a race bred in the highlands of North Africa has flung its children deep into the Sahara, even, perhaps, into the far islands of the Atlantic, and has yet succeeded in maintaining an individuality of type and culture which the negro only has proved powerless to apprehend or assimilate.

We crept along the edges of the precipice to see the view, but fine as it was, it was not so overpowering as the country through which we had passed in the morning, and we spent the remainder of the afternoon in conversation with the old *kaid*—our host. This venerable Berber had a red and roundish face, in which twinkled (behind an enormous pair of spectacles) two kindly blue eyes. His hair and beard were white, his gait the gait of a country gentleman, and the flowing burnouses added to the dignity of his appearance. He might just as well have been the direct descendant of many generations of port-drinking British squires, as the scion of a line of African aborigines. On his breast an order attested the appreciation of his services by the French Government. The two sons of the *kaid* were not unworthy of their father—stalwart, bearded young men who would have passed anywhere for Englishmen. One or other of them accompanied us in our rambles about the village, ready and willing, so far as a very slight knowledge of French would permit, to show us everything that was to be seen. After dinner in the evening we would discuss the latest news with our entertainers, who seemed, indeed, to be as well posted in recent events as we were ourselves. Too much politics was dangerous, and the conversation would drift into religion or differences in custom and law between ourselves and the Kabyles. The thing that most surprised them was the account we gave of the position of women in English society. They did not understand how a man could not divorce his wife at will, how women could

appear on public platforms in the discussion of matters of national importance. The kaid asked, "Your women, then, are masters in a house?" We replied, "Sometimes—but is that never the case with you?" Whereat there was a general laugh, which implied that though the law was different, the custom was not invariably so. As a matter of fact, we were always being confronted with fresh indications that the Berber wife has a very considerable say in the management of her own household. Our account of parliamentary government puzzled them at first, but when we explained it on the analogy of their own former political organisation, they seemed to recognise that here again there was much in common between them and us.

The Kabyles governed themselves on almost purely democratic lines until their last unsuccessful rebellion against the French induced the conquerors to deprive them of their ancient liberties. The *djemaa*, the folk-moot, of every village was, nominally in all cases, really in most, the centre of power. To it were admitted all males of sixteen years of age and upwards, and with membership went the duty of bearing arms in defence of the community. Over the *djemaa* presided an elected Amin, whose authority was as limited as that of any ancient kinglet of our Teutonic forefathers, not only by the principle of election, but by the immense influence of the societies or *soffs*, which corresponded in some degree to our own parties. A *soff*, however, did not confine itself to politics. In it the rich man and the poor, the burnous maker and the agriculturist, were bonded together to secure some common aim. Even women had their own associations for the pursuit of some domestic object. The *djemaa* met in fine weather in the open air; in wet, or in the great heat of summer, under the shade of one of the covered ways which have already been described in most of the

villages. On one side would be the members of one "soff," on the other their opponents, and the division of parties was often no less sanctioned by tradition and custom than it is in our own House of Commons. Every motion had, however, to be carried unanimously. A single dissentient voice might mean that a "soff" of unknown power, including members of many villages, was opposed to the measure. Sometimes the matter was adjusted by appeal to a neighbouring *djemaa*, sometimes the influence of a marabout whose superior piety and virtue commanded obedience was able to adjust the difference of opinion. The marabouts were men who, though often more respected in death than in life, wielded enormous power in virtue of their sanctity. It was the marabouts who led resistance to the Turks; it was the marabouts who fanned into flame the ever-growing dissatisfaction of their countrymen with French intrusion. The marabouts had often urged them to victory, on this last occasion they plunged their country into disaster and defeat. The common people risked their independence and they lost it. The marabouts staked their independence and their reputation and they lost both.

In a land where the blood feud raged unchecked, where every village was divided against itself, it is curious to note how the tribes united under stress of war in a common bond of allegiance to an Amin Amina—a president of the presidents of *djemaas*—how a truce of God was rigorously observed on certain days of festivals and markets, how crimes could be compounded by fines that recall the wergilds of the Saxons.

The marabouts, though families of them are found in all the villages, have also settlements of their own, and they claim a different origin from that of the rest of the population. Most writers on the Kabyles have too readily admitted this claim. The best authorities repudiate it,

allowing only that though there were Arab marabouts, and even negro marabouts, the generality of the class are Berbers by descent. Certainly there is no outward difference between the marabouts and the other Kabyles, and however pleasant may be the occupation of speculating as to whether the former were descendants of Moors expelled from Spain, of runaway Southern Europeans, of Romans, even of Carthaginians, it is also an occupation which can produce no good result.

What the proportion of Berber blood may have been among the Mohammedan conquerors of Spain is a curious question, and one which, though of some importance, is never likely to be settled. It is worth noting that the portrait of Boabdil el Chico which hangs in the Generalife at Granada is the portrait of a fair man, a white man of the best type, and not of an Arab. In those days the supply of blond women to the harems cannot have been extensive, and there is just a possibility that the ill-fated Boabdil was a Berber rather than a Semite.

But to return to Africa. The old *djemaa* system did not survive the latest insurrection. Nowadays the Kabyles no longer settle their parochial affairs in open assembly, but render a grudging obedience to such kaid and governors as the French think good to set over them; and for this they have only the fanaticism of the marabouts and their own folly to thank, for no people in Europe would have been more disposed to cherish popular institutions wherever found than the nation which was compelled by force of circumstances to abolish them. The vendetta, too, has been proscribed, and not altogether vainly, though now and then, as we shall presently see, the old spirit of personal revenge asserts itself in an assassination.

In the course of one of our talks with the kaid we learnt that the people of Gelaa are firm believers in "second

sight," and that some of them are credited with the possession of that remarkable power. Whether "second sight" exists, or whether, if it does, it is quite so remarkable a gift as is usually believed, the fact that there are Kabyles who are familiar with it illustrates what has often been said, that they are more inclined to superstition than the Arabs. Of the latter people I have met few with whom it was possible—at least in their own country—to enter into a discussion of religious matters; but here again is a difference between them and the Berbers, for, with the occasional exception of a marabout, we often found the latter willing to argue points of doctrine in a friendly spirit. Their religion sits lightly, for the most part, on the Kabyles, and their bigotry is as much less than that of the Arabs as their superstition is greater. Their belief in omens is widely diffused, and, it is said, they eat without scruple of the wild pig that abounds on the mountains.

It was evident that our *kaid* had received a very agreeable impression of Englishmen from former visitors. Nothing was too good for us. He produced two iron bedsteads, with mattresses and sheets—an unwonted and unexpected luxury with which we were probably wise to dispense—and presented us with a piece of well-decorated pottery which, as none is made in the immediate vicinity, must have been carried many miles on mule back, and would have for him a very considerable value. I bought a burnous from a local merchant, the *kaid* personally superintending to see that too much was not asked. He even pointed out to me a defect I had not noticed. The price of burnouses varies much, but considering that they are made by a most laborious process which occupies whole weeks, and that a tolerably good one will last a lifetime, the twenty-six francs paid for an ordinary specimen did not seem excessive. Some time afterwards, in another village,

the kaid asked me what I paid for it. I told him to say how much he himself would have given. "Twenty-six or twenty-seven francs," was the answer. This "unsolicited testimonial" to the probity of the chief magistrate at Gelaa was as welcome as it was unexpected to one upon whose mind the methods of business pursued by Arabs had left an indelibly unpleasant impression. I wonder how many men reared in the atmosphere of the East, or, for that matter, of the West, would, like this worthy kaid, go out of their way to prevent a stranger being overcharged?

I have already said something of the picturesqueness of Gelaa. A nearer examination of the villages revealed numerous interesting features. The mosque in the upper village (which we did not enter, to the manifest relief of the natives) contains two or three fine cedar-trees which overshadow the last resting-place of the leader of the late rebellion. Everywhere are quaint carved doorways similar to those of Taizart, walls relieved by inset arches and decorative windows made with tiles, projecting upper stories, numerous covered streets in which are the usual stone benches occupied by men playing the customary draughts. Here a group of little girls regarded us with awe; there a party of boys were gambling with knuckle-bones and shouting, all unconsciously, mixed numerals from all the languages in the Mediterranean. On the mountain-side was the path to the lower village, across which ran a dozen rivulets from as many springs in the limestone rock. At each pool clustered women and girls in picturesque costume of blue and black relieved by brilliant kerchiefs of all the colours of the rainbow, filling their goatskin water-bottles and chattering, no doubt about the latest marriage or divorce. An occasional husband or father would greet us with a smile, satisfied, it would seem, that we had no desire to run away with any member of his family. These

springs, they said, never failed in summer or winter, but as the population is a large one, they fetch water also from the valley a thousand feet below. It is easy to call the Kabyles dirty. They are dirty ; but who would be clean when he had to fetch his bath water up from a small stream, the journey there and back taking perhaps a donkey and an hour or two? It is possible that the most devoted adherent of cold tubs would modify his practice, if not his theory, in such a situation. If he did not it is certain that popular opinion would soon bring him to a compulsory appreciation of the value of water in a country where rain is practically unknown from one end of summer to the other.

The village is reached from the valley by a narrow zig-zag path that takes advantage of the geological formation wherever practicable. The strata lie more or less horizontally with, here and there, curious waves and contortions suggestive of local convulsions at no very distant epoch. The different bands of rock seem to vary in hardness and have weathered into terraces with perpendicular scarps up which it would be almost impossible to climb. On the northern face of the mountain these terraces are utilised for agriculture, but down the sides of the ravine between the two villages they are only wide enough, as has been said, to carry the breakneck path, up and down which move continuous strings of men and women bearing water-skins and implements of husbandry, mules with loads of grain and manure, donkeys with the light plough of the country upon their backs.

Splendid masses of hawthorn filled the air with the scent of may ; giant parsnips with spreading tops sprang like young trees from every cranny. From the dry stems of these plants the Kabyles make, at the end of summer, ingenious circular baskets for figs, the framework of which is neatly joined together with string, the bottom being of

network. In such baskets figs can readily be dried. The fig-tree itself grows fairly, even at this high altitude, and the fruit is an important article of diet. It is said that a kind of brandy is prepared from it and much appreciated by the natives, but of this we had no ocular testimony. Indeed the Kabyles, in our experience, where they are not



HAWTHORN IN THE MOUNTAINS OF GELAA.

in contact with Europeans, are as careful as the Arabs to abstain, in accordance with the dictates of their religion, from all manner of strong drink. In this respect they are much better Muslims than the Persians, who indulge with great freedom in the wines of their country. The pimpinels and sainfoin we had remarked near Tazairt

reappeared at Gelaa in great profusion. The banks of the deep, gully-like, boulder-strewn staircases that pass for roads in this district were overgrown with masses of brambles, large golden broom, various thorn-bushes and smaller scrub. Carob-trees threw deep black shadows down the precipices where only figwort and lichens could find a foothold. Behind all were the omnipresent towers of the Djurdjura flecked with purple cloud shadows, their summits bathed in the warm glow of the afternoon. In such a situation stands the solitary tomb of some great marabout, white, red roofed, with a spacious verandah supported by columns and round-headed arches. At its back the rock falls sheer to the valley: in front is a waving, rippling mass of young green corn studded with wild flowers and silver stemmed fig-trees. No Arab shèkh had ever so fair a tomb, and the architecture of his resting-place would be as different from this as St. Paul's Cathedral from the Parthenon. In Algeria the dome of a shèkh's tomb is high, and its section would be often a pointed arch which contrasts strongly with the low-pitched tile roof of the marabout and its colonnade.

Though the kaid and his sons would talk theology with us, they evidently had no wish to be photographed. One of the sons by the medium of much bad French explained to me that it was lawful, in his opinion, for a Muslim to be photographed only if there was "no shadow" in the ensuing portrait. I quoted the Shah of Persia and numerous other pillars of the Prophet's religion who do not object to photographs with or without shadows, but though he admitted the force of the analogy he did not seem inclined to apply it to himself and his father, so we reluctantly left without a pictorial presentment of our most excellent host. On further consideration we came to the conclusion that what he meant by "no shadow" was the

absence of relief such as a stereoscopic camera gives. One of these apparatuses he had evidently seen in the course of his travels to Constantine or Bougie, and the reality it gave to the picture had apparently shocked or frightened him. The subtlety of a mind which will make one representation of a living object lawful and innocent, and another illegal and even criminal is by no means confined to Gelaa, but it is nevertheless characteristic of such of the Kabyles as have been educated in the literature of their religion.

The kaid, wishing, I suppose, to do us a good turn, procured, when we left, two magnificent mules to take us to Gelaa, but the animals, though by far the best of any we rode in the course of our wanderings, were alarmed at the strange appearance of their riders and it was with the utmost difficulty that we could get near enough to mount. Several devices, such as enveloping their heads in a blanket, were tried with indifferent success ; but when I donned my own burnous, the mule was satisfied with the alteration in my apparel and would let me get on without active opposition. Needless to say the inconvenience of having a beast that would not suffer one within ten feet of him was a serious obstacle to the enjoyment of a journey in which it was frequently necessary to dismount for notes or photographs. On the other hand, the pleasure of having between one's knees an animal as fast as a horse and twice as foot-sure, was so novel that we were tempted to pass by many things without the close investigation which perhaps they merited. Our ride to Akbou was not without incident. The negotiation of the precipitous path from the village was a simple matter, but it looked dangerous enough to the uninitiated eye. At one moment the left foot hung over the valley, at the next, the right. A couple of cows had to be passed with a foot to spare ; a plough on donkey-back threatened to brain whomsoever it

encountered. In one spot an oil mill and press lay full in the road and obstructed the traffic in a manner which would not be tolerated by any people of a less easy-going temperament than the Kabyles. By and by Gelaa on its mountain-top lay behind and above us blocking out half the sky, while glorious panoramas of hill and dale, crag and torrent, unfolded themselves to either side. A bank overgrown with juniper and cistus and sainfoin, a grove of olives, a carob-tree, diversified the sparse vegetation of the lower slopes. Below them again we came to the river valley, where the track wound along the crests of crumbling hills of alluvium—as safe to all appearance as a snow cornice. Everywhere were landslips and slides giving abruptly on the torrent that foamed at their base. In the more secluded hollows of the wady, which the water only filled in winter, grew thickets of tall reeds and oleanders decked with great pink blossoms—the heralds of the coming summer. The sun poured down genial warmth on meadows bright with marigolds and poppies. In one spot a solid sheet of gold, acres in extent, blazed on a warm red hillside, to which the delicate blue Djurdjura formed an impressive setting. Occasional herds of sheep and goats browsed among the scrub, and some cattle—otherwise much the same as the Chawia beasts—with horns recurved over their shoulders attracted our attention.

At last a village stood before us, clear cut upon the skyline. At its foot was a majestic pine, and in the shadow of the pine a marabout's tomb of peculiar construction. The tomb itself was a small model of a Kabyle house. It stood in a courtyard formed by low stone walls protected with a coping of thorn-bushes. A narrow and low doorway, not large enough for a good-sized dog, gave access to the interior had it not been blocked with another thorn-bush. Within, the walls were full of piscinas in which lay



DISTANT VIEW OF THE MOUNTAINS OF GELAA.

little heaps of charcoal and other less recognisable remains. The marabout's thigh-bone was exposed to the vulgar gaze in a corner of his courtyard. Within the inner sanctuary burned oil lamps of the well-known green Moroccan ware. Most curious of all, the bushes all about were festooned with rags of cast-off clothing—just as sometimes the tree at a “holy well” in Ireland is decorated, or the vicinity of the fountain at a Buddhist temple. A



TOMB OF A MARABOUT.

neighbouring tomb was enclosed by a single row of stones set up on edge. At one end of this enclosure was a potsherd which contained charcoal and the remains, perhaps, of incense—all indications of the sanctity which attached to the spot, but which had not deterred some ravenous beast from strewing the dead marabout himself about his own courtyard.

The lower hills around the tomb are covered with groves of olives, and upon the declivity beneath the village itself

groan and squeak a score of mills and presses. Not thirty years ago the Kabyles used a very primitive machine for extracting the oil, but now the screw presses—copied probably from those of Southern France and thus indirectly descended from those in use in Roman times both in Italy and in Algeria itself—have ousted all other means of obtaining the rank-smelling liquid. If the country has gained in picturesqueness, it has lost its pristine savour of wild flowers and mountain air.

At last the hills, red with suggestion of iron and dotted like a leopard's skin with olive-trees, grew smaller and smaller. The Sahel valley came into view and in its midst the river foaming down in spate, muddy and turbulent, from the melting snows on the range to westward. Now a Kabyle in the matter of fording rivers is scarcely less ill-advised than an Arab. To both a river is a thing to be avoided if possible, and when it cannot be avoided, to be crossed in the narrowest part visible, so that the agony of an involuntary washing may be as much as possible curtailed. M—— positively refused to ride straight into the deepest part with his *tellises* full of cameras and plates. He chose his own ford and got across with the water scarcely over the mule's kees. For myself, I had only such light articles as I could carry before me in my lap and so I followed the lead of the mule driver. We were soon up to and above where the girths would come with an English saddle, but just as I was considering what sort of a hand at swimming a mule might prove, my mount gave a great lurch up in front and scrambled into shallow water. I record this passage of the Sahel as a warning to other travellers who may be inclined to prefer the guidance of a native to their own common sense. It is no use spoiling the fruits of a month's labour for the sake of half-an-hour's detour.

No sooner were we fairly across the river and had rested a while to watch the donkeys laden with forage traversing the ford with only a haystack visible above the water, than our attention was distracted by a little crowd of men and boys beside the track. We rode up to them and found a discussion in progress as to the condition of a goat which had just been partially worried by a jackal. Billy was apparently more flattered by the notice taken of



FORDING THE WED SAHEL.

him than by the few scratches he had sustained, so we were going on, when the aggressor himself appeared, not a hundred yards away, looping stealthily through the undergrowth of palmetto. Arski, after some fumbling, produced a colossal revolver and, having obtained from it one or two miss-fires, got off a couple of rounds which might have gone within fifty yards of the jackal but did not even hasten his retreat, and he presently disappeared, accompanied by universal maledictions, in a tangle of asphodel,

tall grass, and the giant reeds from which the Kabyles make their flutes. This was the one wild animal we saw during our sojourn in Algeria.

After eight hours' riding we arrived again at Akbou, and did full justice to the homely fare of the *auberge*. We paid a call on the Administrator, got rid, without much regret, of Arski, and secured the services of another cavalier for the following morning. A considerable quantity of mails had accumulated during our absence, and we spent the rest of the day in the investigation of their contents, not without some inward misgivings as to what the night might bring forth. As a matter of fact nothing troubled either of us—we were probably in too low condition to attract even the hungriest of insects—and after collecting our effects into several sacks we departed at daylight amid many *bons voyages* to ride across the mountains to Michelet.

As a set-off to the mules we had got from Gelaa, three of the sorriest animals it had been our fortune to bestride put in a languid appearance. All the others, it was said, were engaged in agricultural pursuits, from which their owners were loth to withdraw them even for the regulation fee of three francs a head. Two men whom mine host spoke of as "Arabs"—to judge from their demeanour and colour they probably were Arabs and not Kabyles—started grumbling, and so continued during the rest of the day, until we felt fain to excise their tongues and sew their mouths up or take any other violent measures, short of murder, which would give us a few minutes' peace in which to enjoy the magnificent scenery through which we passed. From Akbou to the pass of Chellata is only a matter of four hours, with respectable animals, but we were nearer five. The track winds in interminable zigzags across the path of a new military road which ends at

present nowhere in particular and is not yet metalled. The palmetto scrub ceased a few hundred feet above Akbou, but the jujube and cistus, ilex and juniper accompanied us into the rocky outcrops at the village of Chellata—a most picturesque but unclean collection of houses, most of which were whitewashed and red-tiled, but others tumbledown and only covered with thatch. Its elevation probably accounts for the poverty-stricken appearance of the village, but it also introduces a new feature into the landscape—immense ashes, carefully pruned of all their twigs and leaves each summer when the heat has turned the grass from hay into tinder. Upon the tender shoots of these invaluable trees the Kabyles then feed their flocks and herds. Perhaps the value of this ash (*Fraxinus Australis*) is not recognised elsewhere, but it would seem a tree with a future before it, both in Australia and South Africa. One good turn deserves another, and if the former country has contributed to Algeria the fever-killing eucalyptus, so might Algeria provide Australia with a useful substitute for pasturage ruined by drought. If the experiment of growing this kind of ash-tree in our southern colonies has not been already tried, I hope that some one who reads these lines will be induced to attempt its acclimatisation in a new sphere of usefulness. Whether it would prove an economic success—supposing the tree to be capable of growing where the willow already flourishes—is another matter. The Kabyles cultivate their comparatively small patches of land with minute care and attention, and it is more than possible that an owner of thousands of acres would not find it worth his while to employ a large amount of expensive manual labour in stripping trees to feed some sheep who have nothing to drink. Still, speaking with the humility that becomes ignorance of the conditions, I should like to see the experiment tried by a competent person.

The Col de Chellata is further from the village than it seems, for the track is soon lost amid a wilderness of halfa grass and boulders. Little rivulets that snow has made into streams must be crossed or ascended. Now a natural rock staircase must be climbed, now a tunnel traversed, and then at last the rider and his panting mule emerge upon the grassy downs of the pass and the full beauty of the prospect bursts upon him. To the east lies the Wed Sahel and the mountains of Gelaa, shrouded and heightened as we saw them by a fine blue haze, through which the river and the olive-trees on their ruddy hills beyond loomed vaguely. In the foreground was the red-roofed village, the one decided patch of colour in the landscape. But if the eastern view was fine, that to the west was superb. To the left ran the mighty chain of the Djurdjura—foreshortened it is true—but still impressive, with the grand peaks of Azrou-n-Tehour and Tamgout Lalla Khadidja—so named after one of the Prophet's wives—the highest point in Algeria, her seven thousand five hundred feet sufficing to crown her with almost perennial snows that gleam silvery white across the intervening land and sea and bring to steamy Mustapha and Algiers suggestions of a cooler land of mystery and romance—a land too little known to those who seek their pleasure in the "Sunny South."

On a mountain the other side of the pass—Ta Babort—grows a forest of pinsapo pine, a tree only native to this one spot, but now acclimatised at Constantine and other places. Here, too, is the home of the Barbary baboon, who failed on this occasion to put in an appearance, though we were told there were plenty close by waiting to stone us if we gave them an opening. As the traveller descends from the pass into Great Kabylia the country alters. It is no longer the tumbled sea of rock that surges round



THE DJURDJURA FROM CHELLATA.

Gelaa. Instead are well-ordered hills, one or two thousand feet high, green with verdure to their summits, every crest crowned with whitewashed walls, every hollow and combe full of nestling red roofs. The slopes are still precipitous, the mountains to the left more and more commanding, but it is clear that the region of the High Plateaux is left behind, that Kabylia is of the coast and not of the Sahara, that in front lies a little outpost of Europe, fertile, sunny, well tilled, and thickly populated. To appreciate the full beauty of this land, approach it from the south or east. Do not be tempted to go from the roses and palms of Algiers straight into Kabylia, then it may seem a trifle harsh and uncivilised; spend rather several weeks at Biskra and Constantine, and then ride over the pass of Chellata, and you will seem to be in a new continent of singular beauty and enchantment.

It is impossible to describe the picturesqueness of the track from Chellata to Michelet. There are landscapes enough to occupy all the artists of the world for a century. Constantly ascending and descending by devious ways the track exhausts the possibilities of natural magnificence—hamlets girt with clumps of enormous ashes, lanes shadowed with figs and elms, whose overarching branches form leafy tunnels, in the green depth of which the rocky banks are clothed with ferns and broom and honeysuckle; purling streams with gardens of cherry trees, sycamore, and alder; olives with grim, gnarled trunks that may be centuries old, fields of dense, high corn wrap the mountain-sides. Strange wooden brush-covered bridges span the deeper snow-fed rivers; bracken clothes the highest peaks along the route. Each ascent brings new villages into view as the path edges up the mountain—whitewashed sepulchres these villages, redolent of damp and dirt, shrouded in the perpetual gloom of the glens.

Maidenhair fern and spleenwort spring from crumbling walls ; children dash wildly into their homes as the mules come suddenly upon them through some curved way in which the elders used to sit in weekly council. At a roadside fountain a party of women are drawing water from the clear rivulet that trickles down among the moss and goes forth to fertilise the meadows where wild tulip, garlic, and blue knapweed struggle for the mastery. Devonshire itself could show no such lanes, the Riviera no such wealth of fruit and flowers. Mountain after mountain, gorge after gorge, this tiny land of Kabylia unites in Africa all the beauties of Northern and of Southern Europe. Here the vegetation of the temperate zone attains the summit of its natural perfection and forms a splendid mausoleum for the last remnant of an immemorial culture.

Towards Michelet the last ridge is gained, and with it open, rather barren downs, with halfa grass and bracken. A little village at the topmost point contains one solitary ash, whose huge trunk and still bare branches attested at once the wisdom of extreme antiquity and the severer nature of a mountain climate. The wind blew chill and gusty, and a nigger minstrel from the far Soudan sat huddled in the friendly shelter of a wall, nursing tenderly his home-made mandolin. The bare highroad was thronged with natives going to and from Michelet. Avenues of trees—almond and acacia and sycamore and many others—will one day relieve the whiteness of this new-made artery of commerce ; at present there is nothing to hide the masses of the Djurdjura that tower across a narrow valley—no longer foreshortened, but seen in full front, bristling with ridges, pinnacles, and spires, their topmost summits casting long purple shadows over the snow in the golden afternoon, a few white clouds resting softly on

the lower slopes. No ice age with its glacier hands has smoothed the jagged outlines of the Djurdjura. Only the sun of Africa, the hot scirocco, the frosts and snows of ordinary winter have conspired together to produce these sharper outlines, those more pointed peaks, until they seem to shame the vaunted crags of ice-ground Switzerland.

After ten hours' travelling we alighted from our weary beasts at the little hotel of Michelet, the second French colony, in point of size, in Kabylia. We left the guides to their own reflections, and rushed for our rooms and a wash—the first good wash since leaving Bougie. After that came tea—or rather coffee—and then the inevitable wrangle, whenever Arabs are concerned, over the amount due from us to them, that amount having already been settled on two separate occasions and before we started. Of course they wanted money to put up, money to replace a broken shoe, money to feed the mules, money to get back to Akbou, money to show there was no ill-feeling; but being habituated to this kind of extortion we gave them their legal fare and a substantial tip, and had the pleasure of hearing far more about our ancestors for several generations back than we had ever had the good fortune to know before. Any one who prefers picturesqueness to historical accuracy and who desires to make out a pedigree for himself cannot do better than consult an Arab guide when he pays him off. The Administrator at Michelet received us with the utmost cordiality, and assured us that it would not be necessary in his district to have a cavalier, tourists being common phenomena. He showed us a number of pieces of Kabyle pottery, told us where they were made, and generally did as much as he could in the short time at his disposal to assist us by advice and information.

CHAPTER XI

GREAT KABYLIA

Climate of Kabylia—A Scirocco—The Beni Yenni and their Country—Cork Trees—A Fountain—A Silversmith—A Mystery—A Breton—Fort National—The Road to Tagamont Azouz—White Fathers—A Sickle—An Interior—Pottery—To Tamaocht in the Rain—A Carpet-seller—Measurements—The Market—Return to Fort National—A Spoilt Village—To Mekla—Djemaa Seridj and some Unpleasantness—An English Mission and its Work—Kabyle Characteristics—To Tizi-Ouzou—A would-be Butler.

MICHELET is one of the most prosperous, or least unprosperous-looking French colonies we saw in Algeria. It was very new. Its houses shone with red tiles and bright paint. Its trees were neatly planted; its walls were spotlessly white; its shutters rivalled the green of the surrounding hills. It stands very high, and the climate is said to be "just like France"—whatever that may mean—for the summer suns are warmer than anything France can show, and the winters would seem to be sometimes, if not always, of Arctic severity. Some English travellers were snowed up at Michelet this winter for a considerable time, and very dull they would probably have found it but for the Administrator, and, possibly, one or two other residents. Such experiences should warn—but they do not—those of our fellow countrymen who go south in search of warmth during the season of winter (so called) at home. There is

an impression abroad that the shores of the Mediterranean are bathed in a perpetual summer of sunshine, whereas there is probably no warmer spot, nearer than the West Indies, than a place beside an English fireside. Those who have been dug out of snow drifts in Algeria, those who have shivered in the tiled cellars of Riviera and Italian hotels, and seen the streets of Cairo awash with sewage-tainted rivers, those who have been battened down for days together in yachts—aye, and in great liners, too—on the “blue waters” of the inland sea, are slow to confess the severity of their experiences, and a new generation of victims is left, unwarned, to make for itself its own unpleasant discoveries. There would be no great harm in this if the discoverers were not so often invalids, to whom their ignorance may be fatal—wherefore I repeat that Kabylia has a winter climate corresponding to that of the same latitude and altitude in America, that May is the time to visit it, and that if English men or women find it “too hot” in that month they confess themselves unable to bear and enjoy what millions of their own flesh and blood have thriven on from their youth up in all parts of the habitable globe.

We despatched our luggage by the useful diligence to Fort National and rode ourselves through the lovely country of the Beni Yenni. A hot, strong scirocco was blowing all the forenoon, but beyond a slight haze on the mountains, which added something to the view, it did no more than permit us to indulge in the luxury of riding in our shirt-sleeves. The greyness of the atmosphere recalled a summer day in England, nor did we appreciate less the beauty of the country because of the familiarity of the cold lights under which we saw it. The path towards the Beni Yenni follows at first the highroad, then turns abruptly down the mountain at a spot where stands the large hospital

of Sainte Eugénie amid shady groves of ash and other northern forest trees. Heaths line the road, vines cling with tropical luxuriance to ilex and olive. The cornfields down the precipitous slopes of the hills are studded with circular shelter huts or barns, rudely fashioned with posts and brushwood, with perhaps a coarse net spread over all to keep the thatch from blowing off. These huts are very common in Great Kabylia, though we saw none near Gelaa or anywhere else on the east side of the Wed Sahel. They appear to do duty partly as shelters for those who watch the crops before harvest, partly as temporary storehouses for the corn and forage when they are gathered in. In some villages there are long double lines of these barn-like structures, at the season in which we saw them empty and out of repair. Their chief interest lies in the fact that old-time travellers in the country generally spoke of the miserable hovels in which some of the Berbers lived, and it is possible we have in these huts the descendants of the rude shelters which sufficed in former days to protect the "Moors" from the rigours of their native climate.

The track from Michelet to Fort National was better than that from Akbou to the former place, but it did not, perhaps, pass through such attractive scenery. Indeed, the highroad, prosaic and severe though it be, commands at every turn views more striking than the little mountain-path which creeps from one deep ravine into another. The Kabyle villages, as seen from the main road, are legion. The greenness of the hills is strongly contrasted with their red roofs and white towers, and the blue mountains behind lend an additional charm. The Beni Yenni are more easily reached from Fort National than from Michelet, and the expedition to them should be made from the Fort, where it is easier to procure good mules and a reliable guide.

A flora as varied and charming as any we had yet seen

lighted up the dark valleys where a big meadow cranes-bill was especially conspicuous. The mountain streams, swelled with snow water from which our men drank copiously without misgivings, were wide but never deep, and the ravines wherein they ran were full of scrub and cork-trees, many of them recently stripped. We met also donkeys, laden with huge bundles of bark, labouring up the zigzags, and in more than one village cork entered largely into the composition of the roofs of the houses. Here is evidently the germ of one of the future industries of the country, which a little enterprise and capital alone are necessary to develop. In Algeria, however, it is too often the case that no one moves in these matters until he can secure some sort of backing from the Government. It is the State which is expected to set an appropriate duty on the import of the commodity, the State whose function it is to lend the money for the business and build a railway or a road to carry away its produce ; finally, it is the State which will have to bear the loss when the speculation fails—as it often will fail when mere children, commercially speaking, are in charge of it. This is not the way to develop the resources of the country.

We halted at midday for refreshment and repose beneath a silver ash and beside a beautiful spring of clear, cold water, which bubbled from the foot of a hill on which a village stood. A little pump-room—if one may use so vulgar an expression—of neat construction afforded shelter to the washerwomen who came to gossip there. A huge tank of stone supplied the drinking-water, and from it several girls picturesquely clad in white bodices and short, dull-red skirts were filling great amphoræ made by their mothers on lines that may have been an heritage from far-off days when Roman colonies supplied the models. Not that the Romans intruded into Kabylia, or rather into this

particular part of it—on the contrary, the Administrator at Michelet asserted with the utmost confidence that there was not a trace of Roman occupation in his district ; but still it is reasonable to suppose that the Berber men sought work in the foreign towns, just as they seek it now, and



KABYLE GIRL AND BASKET.

returned with various trophies of their masters' art, just as they are doing to-day. Nothing, however, is much more deeply rooted in the lives of a simple people than its patterns and designs, for these same decorative efforts are the offspring of their own brains, an expression, it may be

said, of their national psychology. Even in our complicated modern relations what a world of difference is there between the treatment of the same subject in France and England, or, to take another example, between the zigzags of one Pacific island and the spirals and curves of another, though both may aim therein at the representation of the frigate-bird, the sacred fowl to which they offer common worship. It is probable, in fact, that from whatever source the Berbers borrowed, if they did borrow, they made as time went on the loan a part and parcel of their own belongings; they modified each shape and pattern according to the genius that was in them, so that at last the foreign motive was as truly typical of them and theirs as that which had its origin in their proper life and country.

In one of the villages through which we passed we made a halt to see a silversmith at work. Most of the ornaments were of the usual type, set with clumsy blocks of coral and red composition to imitate coral; but others were rather tastefully enamelled with patterns in blue and green and yellow. Some pendants which had just been finished, but into which the red had not yet been inserted, M——bought as works of art. It is a pity that the Kabyles overload their persons and their ornaments with hideous chunks of dirty coral, but as they do the anthropologist must accept the result with resignation. We found the worthy silversmith by no means so unsophisticated as might have been expected. It was too near Fort National and in the track of the tourist. Yet we scored a triumph by overhearing the price discussed between the vendor and his brother. "Four douros," said the brother in Arabic—the Berbers have only two numerals of their own—"Five douros," said the silversmith to us in French. Whereat we smiled greatly, and said that we would accept the brother's valuation of the goods. There was a general laugh at the

tradesman's discomfiture, and he, to do him justice, handed over the articles with a very good grace. Next time he has European visitors he will probably make use of one of the trade jargons which the Kabyles are said to have developed to such good purpose that no one, not even a native who is not in the freemasonry of their business, can understand them. Pottery—rough red ware with “key” patterns in black—we bought also at the village from a number of children, who exhibited the only too familiar traits of native peoples spoilt by intercourse with tourists, whose purses and hearts are larger than their discretion.

A lady who knows Kabylia well told us she had heard from a French official that there existed among the Beni Yenni an image, in pottery, of some goddess whom they worship in the seclusion of their homes. Whether the gallant officer was mistaken in his observations it is impossible to say, but there is something so fascinating in the thought that the relics of an older religion than Islam may still linger on in the more secluded valleys of Kabylia, that I record the story here, not with intent to set known facts at defiance, but in the hope that some romantic reader may be fired to get the question settled.

So we passed from village to village until the last long dell with its cork-trees and arbutus, its waterfalls and rocks, was passed, and an ever-improving path led upward among the hills towards the Fort. Down came the clouds heavy and white, and charged with drizzling rain. They enveloped the mountains in cold fog, dispelling the scirocco. Down, too, came the mercury at least twenty degrees in as many minutes, and all at once we found ourselves far away on some Scotch moorland where the mists lay close among the ferns and bracken.

Of a sudden the wind rose fitfully, and whirling the cloud-fleeces down the gullies, revealed to us close at hand

the loopholed walls and gates of Fort Napoleon—now Fort National. In five minutes we were sipping coffee in a good hotel, and in ten we were back into winter clothes, surveying the last long arrows of the evening sunlight as they played upon the summits of the mountains.

A Breton, who appeared to spend his time in a state of semi-intoxication, but who cherished Socialistic convictions, which he inflicted during dinner on a company assembled in no less than three adjoining rooms, endeavoured to take us under his wing, in order, as he said, to show that he was by no means prejudiced against the English. That did not prevent him from indulging in a virulent attack on our treatment of the Irish and Boer peoples—I hope Irish readers will pardon the coupling together of these nations, it was the Socialist's idea and not mine—which only succeeded in moving us to mirth. After one or two other attempts to be affable our friend relapsed into moody mutterings, amid which we could distinguish such phrases as “Des Juifs,” “Un Anglais—que voulez-vous?” and, after a final *apéritif*, into a sonorous sleep.

The waiter was a puzzle to us. He spoke excellent French, joked like an Irishman, had a face and head like an Italian of Florence, but was as supple and lithe in his movements as a naked savage. He proved to be a Kabyle from a neighbouring village, and, at our request, found a cousin who would serve as our guide and interpreter for an expedition to the Ait Aissa tribe. This choice we had no cause to regret, and when we finally parted with the man at Tizi-Ouzou, he expressed himself as desirous of accompanying us to England in any capacity whatever.

The bright, honest, and happy Kabyle formed a sufficient contrast to the half-mad and wholly alcoholic Breton who plagued us with his grumblings and disingenuous profusions of peace and good-will towards all men.

Fort National stood a creditable siege on the last occasion when the Kabyles were "out." It is now strongly garrisoned, chiefly by Zouaves, who look by far the most soldierly men among the French troops in Algeria, and though it would easily be knocked to pieces by field guns planted on any one of half a dozen hills around, it is still probably quite strong enough from its commanding position to repel any attack by badly-led and worse-armed Berbers. The climate—Fort National is more than three thousand feet above sea-level—is said to be pleasant and "suitable for Europeans." Considering that it has harder winters than ever occur in the south of England, and that the temperature is never oppressive even in the height of summer—these statements rest on the authority of local residents—it certainly should not be a difficult place to colonise. Still the town is very small, and many of the better houses appear to be inhabited by natives and Arabs. The soil has every appearance of fertility, and the numerous northern and southern trees attest the wide possibilities of the locality for an intelligent agriculturist.

Six hours' easy riding, including stoppages for food and photographs, brought us to Tagamount Azouz. The roads were very fair and the scenery magnificent, the Djurdjura getting ever nearer and bolder. The snow upon them sparkled like crystal in the unclouded sunlight. Acres on acres of fig-trees and olives and corn led up and down the rolling hills; avenues of ashes, vine-festooned, and strangely thick in foliage where they had been clipped, lined the path and conducted us to the usual bright villages—the most beautiful of which was certainly that called Beni Atulli, only a few miles from the Fort. Wild flowers of all hues and sizes carpeted the few uncultivated banks and lighted up the sombre greens of dense olive



THE VILLAGE OF BENI ATULLI AND THE DJURDJURA

groves. At one time we would wind along the edge of a precipice, at another we would traverse open park country, where cattle browsed in the lush grass and shepherd boys reclining beneath the olive-trees were playing strange wild melodies on mellow pipes. We halted for the midday meal beneath an ancient fig-tree; the ground around was covered with tall bracken and huge ten-foot mallows in full bloom. Behind, on the hillside, were olives—always olives—and field roses, patches of pink and white centaury, cranesbills, and saxifrage. At our feet ran a broad, soft river in a white bed of sand and rocks, the channel wide enough to take the winter torrents that descend towards the sea with a fury that cannot be passed by man or beast.

Some fields had lofty cactus hedges, and everywhere were the round shelters already described. In an ilex was also a similar hut—perhaps fifteen feet above the ground—and in another a platform, both constructions intended for the use of those who guard the crops. We asked whether the baboons from the neighbouring mountains were the cause of these elaborate precautions, but were again assured that they never came near this part of the country. If there are no baboons there must be another member of the same zoological order who cannot distinguish between mine and thine, and of such there would seem to be plenty among the Kabyles, though we never came in contact with them. Ravens croak incessantly among the higher crags of the hills, but smaller birds are not too common, although the natives have practically no firearms, and seem to make no effort to catch the feathered songsters as additions to their own slender diet of couscous and milk.

At Tagamount Azouz is a large cemetery of oblong graves, many of them covered with huge slabs and re-

sembling very much the old brick tombs with flat tops so common in our own churchyards. The cemetery, once filled, does not seem to remain long inviolate. A few of the graves, over which the road passed and the sheds were built, were yawning wide. Dogs and jackals had long since eaten what was left of their occupants, and so the land gradually reverts to its original uses. An enormous ash-tree below the village was encircled by stone settles,



BARNs AT TAGAMOUNT AZOUZ.

on which the older men spend much of their apparently inexhaustible leisure. It must not be thought, though I say this, that the Kabyles do not work, and work hard; only the time of our visit was not the busy season of the year, and most of the labour in the fields was of a light character. The women, at least, were always occupied with weaving or pottery making.

The White Fathers have an outpost here, and educate the boys, upon whose manners and intelligence they

exercise a most excellent influence. The kaid, a very friendly, hospitable man, who expressed himself as being especially glad to see us, in that we were the first Englishmen to visit his village, had, much to his regret, no son and heir; but his nephews were excellent French scholars, and one, a boy of fourteen, seemed to possess more than ordinary intelligence. From these boys we learnt much about the people and their industries. They took us everywhere and showed us all that could be shown to foreigners and Infidels—the forges, with their bellows of goatskin, driven by a lever in the hand, or directly, opening and closing like a Gladstone bag; the houses, the granaries, and the manufacture of the much-sought pottery. Of a blacksmith I bought a sickle—exactly similar to those in use at the oasis of Dakhel—serrated like a saw, the notches pointing downwards from the tip. The teeth can be of little use in an iron or steel reaping-hook, and these may be descended from the neolithic flint-set tools, remains of which occur in many quarters of the world.

In most of the houses the arrangement is very simple. A single room, that may be thirty feet in length and fifteen broad, is divided into two compartments by a low stone wall, the one half being at a much lower level than the other. On this wall are the granaries—two or more in number—made of stucco and ornamented with curious rings and diamonds, even with representations, long since conventionalised, of human hands. The appearance of these huge square bins is almost Mexican, and they are quite unlike anything else in the country. In the cellar thus formed behind the low wall and beneath the granaries are generally to be found a mule, goat, or even a pet sheep. The other half of the room is devoted to the preparation of couscous and to eating it, to the making and drying of pottery, and to the mats which serve for beds. The

tile roof is carried on sturdy poles whose ends have a natural fork or are cut into a crescentic shape to receive the superincumbent rafters. There are no tie-beams, and, the pitch of the roof being flat, the side walls are only kept from bulging outwards by the solidity of the masonry and the addition of queen-posts, which take up some of the weight of the structure above. The doors are plain for the most part, not carved like those of Gelaa, nor are there ornamental tile windows as at Tazairt. Clumsy but efficient padlocks of iron or brass, worked by spiral keys like enormous screws, render the house proof against ordinary robbers, but there are Kabyles who know how to undermine the wall of a house in a single night and abstract the property of the sleeping inmates without so much as disturbing a wakeful child or a fretful goat. In a few of the better dwellings the stable is ventilated into the living room by arches in the party wall, and the eaves are carried down to form pleasant porches over the main doorway. In no case did we see any provision for cleaning the cellar-stable, or for admitting its inmates by any other way than that of the front door.

Many of the houses face inward to a greater or lesser courtyard, the whole compound having a common entrance from the street, and an encircling wall. In such little communities dwell separate families, grandparents, fathers, mothers, cousins—all to the third and fourth generation, or until the limits of their scant accommodation can be no longer exceeded.

The kaid had a property adjoining that of his brother. His courtyard contained a well with an ordinary windlass and bucket, a good stone seat beneath a spreading fig-tree, and a little patch of corn for the benefit of his mules, round which was a border of onions, lettuces, and thistles, from which an excellent salad was always at his disposal.

There are, of course, endless variations on the usual plan, but the above description of the houses is fairly true for those we saw. In addition to the granaries, there are often amphoræ from two to three feet high, which, placed in stands of mud or ornamental woodwork (like that in the illustration) serve to contain a season's supply of olive oil, from which the kitchen may be supplied and the lamps replenished. These lamps are made of the pottery of a neighbouring village and some of them closely resemble the famous seven-branched candlestick depicted on the Arch of Titus, plundered from the temple at Jerusalem. Others are simpler, but in general their shapes conform to the Kabyle taste for doubling, trebling, and even quadrupling their handiwork, the parts being connected together by quaint spouts and handles, and strengthening bridges, while, in the case of water-pots, there is free communication between the bodies of all the component parts. The plaited corn bins of Gelaa do not seem to be found in Tagamout Azouz, but instead there are the stucco granaries, and even whole rooms reached by an external ladder and a trap-door, full of grain and dried figs.

Though the inhabitants are all Mohammedans and must not, in theory, represent either in drawing or sculpture any kind of thing which has life, we found a wall decorated, above a dado of the typical diamonds and cross-hatchings, with figures in red of a lion, a camel, and even of a man, to say nothing of a tree which, as they affirmed, was intended to be a cedar. The potter, too, often allows his sense of art to outrun his religious professions, and makes images of tortoises and camels, the exceeding badness of whose execution is, from the orthodox point of view, the one point that could be pleaded in his defence.

We had come to this village to see the pottery made, and we saw it. It would be tedious and unnecessary to

describe in these pages another such process, so the following notes must suffice for those who are sufficiently interested in the subject to read them. The operator was a very ancient and wizened dame whose face was lined and wrinkled like a collapsed balloon ; but her good-nature was infinite, and she faithfully fulfilled the contract we made with her—that we should be shown everything and should remove whatever of her stock-in-trade we wished to



INTERIOR OF KABYLE HOUSE WITH WALL-PAINTINGS.

have. The larger amphoræ are built in strips, not simply punched out like the Chawia bowls, and their manufacture occupies a long time, as they must be allowed to dry, section by section, before the addition of the next few courses. The painting of the patterns is executed in red and black on a white ground, the brushes being simply pieces of stick with a little wool rolled around one end. When dry, the vessel is fired with several others in a pile of ilex logs, the final varnish being dabbed on while it is

still hot. In this way Tagamount Azouz turns out scores of jars and water-pots, pottery-tables and dishes, which are sold to merchants who, in their turn, convey them to every part of the country.

The evening views of the Djurdjura from the platform of rock occupied by this village are magnificent, as the clouds creep slowly along the ledges and barren faces of the mountains. The majesty of the Alps is one thing,



POTTERY MAKING.

that of the Atlas another. The shorter twilight of a southern latitude does not permit the long-drawn after-glow of European sunsets, yet in beauty of tone and wealth of colour the Djurdjura more than make up for the brief duration of their borrowed loveliness.

The kaid fed us well with chicken and soup and couscous. He gave us wine—which, for once, was even fair—the produce, as we afterwards were told, of the White Fathers' vineyard. We slept, like Kabyles, on the mat-

strewn floor, in our burnouses, and, when the day for our departure arrived, it was with genuine feelings of regret that we bade adieu to Tagamout Azouz.

We plunged a little deeper into the mountains. Wild roses, figs, olive-, orange-, and apricot-trees and ashes swathed in hanging vines and creepers, smothered hill and dale. By every spring, in every wall, a group of ferns grew high and comely in the shadow of the hills. The sky, that had been threatening for hours, flushed suddenly with vivid lightning. The thunder bellowed down the gorges, and re-echoed from mountain to mountain in rolling peals. Down came the rain, at length, tropical rain—sheets and waterspouts. Two hours of this with a brief interlude of drought did not succeed in penetrating the homespun wool of my burnous. It waxed heavier and heavier, until I was glad of the mule to help me carry it, but it suffered scarce a drop to penetrate, and I blessed Gelaa and its burnous-weavers from the bottom of my heart.

Tamaocht has a somewhat sombre appearance. One enters by the cemetery under dark groves of trees where the graves are carefully built of squarish blocks with stones at head and foot, and the drip of water from the leaves alone breaks the stillness of the dead. The village, though it occupies the summit of a little hill, is buried amid the higher mountains all around. It is low, and sheltered, for we saw some date-palms of considerable height, standing, strangely enough, in a grove of ash-trees, beneath the roots of which was bracken, growing freely and greenly, as much at home as if on English fells.

The kaid's house was not very impressive. It reeked of damp and we lit a big fire to dry our clothes. The smoke drove us out again, so we prospected the village under the guidance of a man who knew a few—very few—words of English. He had been employed, he said, at a

large shop in London, selling Kabyle carpets ; but as he could not pronounce or write the name of his employer we remain in ignorance to this day of where such carpets can be procured—no great loss, probably, for the natives are taking fast to the use of “anila,” some of which we saw in course of preparation at Tagamont Azouz, and “anila” has spoilt all the old richness and softness of the colouring, while detracting a great deal from the per-



OLIVE GROVES AT TAMAOCHT.

manence of the macaw-like hues which alone it seems capable of producing.

There are at Tamaocht the usual houses and the usual covered lounges of stone, the polished seats of which we found deeply incised with chess-board patterns for the convenience of such as resort thither to play. On the whole the village was dirty and unkempt, and the kaid was certainly not so good a host as our friend at Azouz. Still we were on business and not on a pleasure trip, so that if

we did have to sleep in our wet blankets on a wet floor it was all in "the day's work." Here is the home of the pottery camel and of many of the finest jars and amphoræ. Of the last we bought two enormous, gaudily decorated specimens and left orders for them to meet us in Tizi Ouzou on a certain date—orders which were punctually carried out. The camels were drying over a slow fire—for the atmosphere was damp—and as their limbs were long and loose, and probably fragile, we hesitated to invest largely in this kind of live-stock. Two of them did arrive in England, in the end, but all the legs had to be cemented on again, so that the beasts looked more broken-kneed than ever. I do not recommend the purchase of pottery camels to those who prefer elegance to quaintness.

We were now in the very heart of Kabylia, and our measurements had to be completed. Fortunately the people were easily attracted by the offer of *ashera surdi*—fifty centimes—apiece, and were, besides, good-natured and obliging. Of their cleanliness the less said the better. The men of Tamaocht seemed to the eye of a slightly different type to any Kabyles we had yet seen, but the measurements we took showed, as they often do, that the unaided eye is a bad judge of physical characteristics. Fair men, though common enough all about, were not among our subjects, and many of these last were so much sunburnt that their portraits appear to be the photographs of "gentlemen of colour."

We left Tamaocht in the rain—our stay had been short but busy—and we left it without great regret. A young marabout, from a neighbouring village of marabouts, accompanied us to a market which lay on the road to Tagamont Azouz. The Kabyles, as has been already said, are great traders, and there is a market somewhere, within easy reach of several villages, nearly every day in

the week. To these *suks* are driven herds of cattle and sheep and goats—one poor pet sheep we saw on his road to execution with a red collar of flannel round his woolly neck. Numerous cakes are also brought for sale, bread, and even pottery; but the feature of the market is the butchers' public abattoir, where the carcasses hang on long gallows, and the dogs grow fat with much blood and offal. At this gathering there can hardly have been less than a

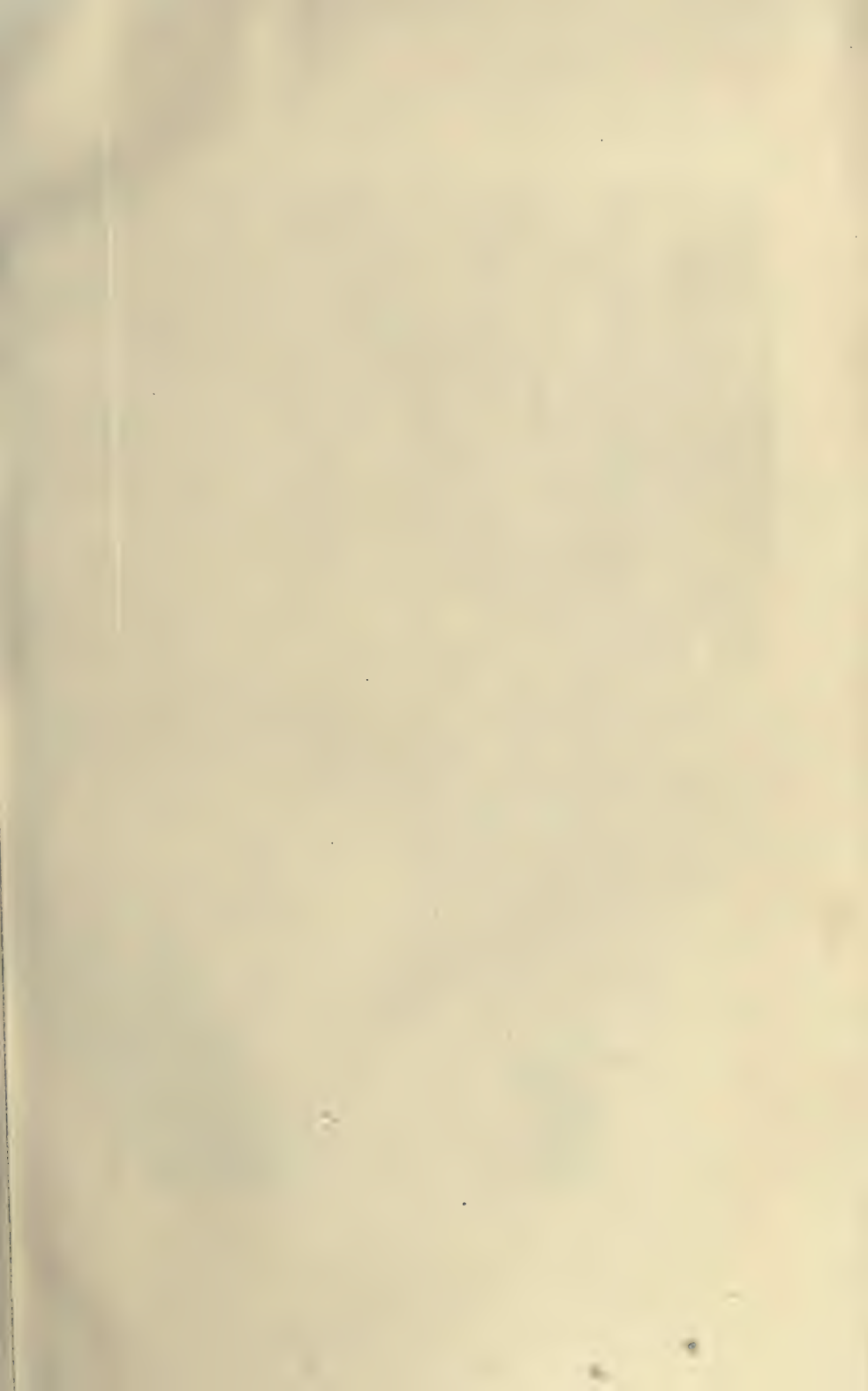


A KABYLE MEAT-MARKET.

thousand men and boys, and the tracks were almost impassable with mules and oxen. Many of our old friends came to shake hands, then hurried off again to negotiate a sale or purchase, and we had some difficulty in persuading the kaid's nephew to come with us to Tagamout Azouz and hand over the boxes of curios which he was keeping for us. It said a great deal for the confidence these worthy people had in our integrity, that they entrusted us, the hiring of our mules and the keys of their houses, to a lad of fourteen,

when nearly all the men had left the village and only women and children remained. We had a difficulty in finding any one to boil our billy for the midday meal, but the old potter-woman came nobly to our assistance, and we made an excellent dinner of tinned soup, sardines, Kabyle cakes, and chocolate, the last delicacy being much to the taste of our young entertainers.

The final stage of the journey was done in the rain, and it was a long stage, for we had to take a wide detour in order to avoid the swollen river. It was a curious procession. First, our two selves mounted on mules and clad in dripping burnouses, hugging within their ample folds whatever of value would be harmed by exposure to the saturated *tellises*. Next came our man, who had paid a visit to the White Fathers and had begged of them a bottle of wine for our use, but had omitted to mention that he had done so, until his increasing loquacity induced him to betray himself. Then came a sumpter mule laden with blankets and packages of purchases, driven by a man who bore in addition to a stout pole a pottery-table and a camel-headed jar, which we had acquired *en route*, and which were too big to be carried safely on the mules. The kaid's nephew, also nursing various objects of virtue on our behalf, brought up the rear on another mule, and in this order we re-entered Fort National, as luck would have it, just after the rain had ceased, and all the world and his wife were taking an evening stroll in the street, or, at the cafés, some stronger kind of appetiser for their dinners. Strange to say only one of the fragile articles was broken on the way, and, though we had agreed with the "burro-puncher" to subtract half a franc from his pay for every casualty, we were so content to be back within reach of dry clothes and warm quarters that we paid him up in full, and bidding goodbye to the boy, who was immensely





TAOURIRT MOKRAN.

pleased with the gift of a Norwegian knife, betook ourselves to the hotel as quickly as possible, for the sight of two bedraggled and half-Kabylished Englishmen was becoming too much for the sense of humour of the crowd.

Our Breton, whom we beheld at a distance imbibing some sort of liquid refreshment, appeared too much engrossed in his congenial task to notice our arrival; and for this stroke of good fortune we were duly thankful. The weather improved so much later on that we had hopes for a fine morrow, which were doomed to bitter disappointment. The clouds kept rising like grey balloons out of the valley, up the green hillsides, and into the grim grey vault overhead. But the valleys were by no means exhausted of their moisture, and though the mists kept rising more took their places, and the chequer of fields and forest and blue distance was presently lost in one uniform white pall.

We had one more short ride to a village called Taourirt Mokran to see some rough, unglazed ware in the process of manufacture. The varnish is omitted in order to leave the vessels porous, so that in summer the water it contains may be cooled by evaporation. The same principle is applied to the making of some quaint South Spanish water-pots, and is common enough in Egypt, where the *kullehs* are so porous as to be perpetually sweating whether the sun is warm or not.

In the valley below this village is a beautiful little stream and even a waterfall, which may be admitted at will to certain roughly circular rock-basins, in which the crushed olives are washed to extract the last vestiges of the oil. Close by is a bath-house with a verandah supported on square white columns—not a common sight in Kabylia, but none the less picturesque in its setting of olive-trees and ashes. Buttercups—real English butter-

cups—were growing in quantities about the mosque. This building seemed to contain two stories, to the upper of which an outside stair gave access. It was quite unlike the Arab mosques, and was, indeed, little more than an enlarged edition of the ordinary house of the country. At Tagamount Azouz a similar building had also two stories and a tower, the upper one being used on occasions of festivals, to accommodate the worshippers who could not find room for their devotions on the lower. A number of the village women were washing clothes, with the assistance of what looked like pieces of fat. Apart from this evidence of a desire to be clean, we did not see much in the place to attract us. The people have been thoroughly spoilt by tourists; the children shouted for "*surdi*" and fought one another over the graves of their ancestors, which were enclosed in a walled space at the centre of the village; even the men, who were usually so courteous, were a nuisance with their importunities, and the women wanted extravagant prices for their silver ornaments and amulets, besides demanding something extra for talking with us to compensate for the danger they ran of being observed by an irate husband and promptly divorced. As a matter of fact their husbands were probably in most cases the very men who guided us to where the jewellery was for sale.

In short, Taourirt Mokran and the next village we visited left an impression upon our minds so disagreeable that, after the lapse of weeks, the true proportion between good and evil in Kabylia had scarcely been restored to them. Again we got a thorough soaking, but on this occasion we re-entered our hotel boldly and with conscious pride, for no one else had dared to brave the elements, except the Zouave sentry, whose business it was, and who saluted us with an appropriate witticism.

There is a billiard-table in the Hôtel des Touristes at Fort National, the cloth a little damaged by excited soldiers, but still a billiard-table, than which there is no greater source of enjoyment on a pouring day, when even ducks attain their full stature in a few hours, and everything without is fast reverting to the condition of a huge morass.

The time had come for us to leave our beloved Berbers. Beards came off, collars went on. Civilisation was before us, pre-history behind. It remained only to reach Tizi-Ouzou and the railway. Two routes presented themselves, the one by the diligence—this we chose for our luggage—the other by the mountain tracks and mules—this we decided was the way for ourselves. The day was cool and threatening as we shambled slowly down a deep ravine towards the valley of Sebaou—a green, fertile and, comparatively, level expanse of country intersected by the bleached, white river bed. There are several “colonies” in the valley, and the land looks good, though thistles and charlock are rather much in evidence. Strictly speaking we were no longer in the real Kabylia, for this was a region to which the Roman arms and, after them, the Roman agriculturist had penetrated. It is easy of access from Bougie and the sea, and its native inhabitants have without doubt been constantly exposed to all sorts of foreign influence. Yet, though there are as many churches as mosques in view, and the land is chequered with logical precision by square cornfields and vineyards, the Kabyles were still there, scratching the soil with their oxen or mules and their inefficient ploughs, the share of which is this much better than the Chawia, in that it boasts a sort of iron shoe.

Mekla village is genuinely French, and, though of recent foundation, not a little picturesque with its groves of lofty

gum-trees and poplars. In the street is a beautiful spring of water filling a large tank in which the eucalyptus droops as in a mirror. A market was in full swing, so we sent for the kaid and asked if he could put us up at Djemaa Seridj. He was a very young man and not over polite, and he gave us to understand that we should have to sleep in the French *auberge*. We decided, therefore, to push on to Tizi-Ouzou that night, after paying a visit to some English ladies who are in charge of a mission station at Djemaa Seridj. It is only about half a mile from Mekla to the Kabyle village and, as we arrived about the hour of *déjeuner*, we thought it well to postpone a while our call at the mission. This time we spent in taking photographs about the village, where the mosque is very picturesquely embowered in trees and the cactus hedges are covered with vines and honeysuckle. Orange and pomegranate-trees were in full blossom, and we were enjoying to the full the beauty of the place when we encountered the kaid and his friends returning hot-foot from the market. They immediately demanded in peremptory tones what business we had in the village without a permit from the Mayor of Mekla. As we had not been informed that such a permit was necessary here, and had never had to obtain one elsewhere, we laughed at their rudeness and would have departed peacefully had they not laid hands on our bridles and resolutely barred the way. There was nothing for it but to fight or interview the mayor, but as the former alternative would probably have led to an ignominious instead of a dignified visit to that functionary, we decided to "go quietly." It was annoying, but the distance was fortunately not great, and we presently found ourselves in the company of a very amiable old gentleman, who laughed heartily at our misadventure, soundly rated the kaid and his retinue, and wished us a hearty *bon voyage*.



A NATIVE OFFICIAL.

to wherever we wished to go. Accordingly we lost no time in returning to the native village to pay our respects to the English ladies, whose lot cannot be a very happy one among such a crew. Still they have some converts and have built two little halls for the men and women respectively, very neatly furnished, and decorated with appropriate texts. Their bungalow—if I may so term it—is comfortable, and has a pretty garden, for which they receive a regular supply of water just as do their Kabyle neighbours. Still there are drawbacks to what would seem at first glance an earthly paradise. There are the heat and drought of summer, the fever, the ill-will of the more fanatical villagers, the indifference of the many: I do not know that the establishment of a mission of the White Fathers in the same village is calculated to promote the conversion of the Muslims to either form of Christianity, nor is the Protestant and English institution regarded with favour by the central government at Algiers. Until recently it was always being badgered and supervised, and a former Mayor of Mekla, to whose Anglophobic sentiments we shrewdly suspected our reception by the Kabyles to be due, had not done much to make the life of the foreign ladies more agreeable or more profitable. One instance of that kindness of our countrywomen, which has already produced a more open mind among the Kabyles, we saw for ourselves, and by accident. As we passed the open door of a house in the village we saw a young man lying, apparently in the final stages of consumption, on a good iron bedstead with clean sheets, pillows, and various other little comforts which would go far to make his last days happy. Yet this was a former convert who had relapsed into Mohammedanism during an absence from the village and had come home—to die it is true, but, so far as we knew, to die a Muslim. Still he received the

same attentions and kindness as before. Even if his case had stood isolated, it could not have failed to leave a lasting impression upon the minds of his co-religionists.

We had often noticed how large a proportion of the Kabyle men were blond, but never had we seen a woman with fair hair. Now we learnt the explanation. The women dye their hair, deep black, with a decoction of gall-nut. The marabout ladies—none of whom we had probably ever seen, for they are kept jealously secluded—were described to us as being very white skinned and much more given to cleanliness than the others. Apart from the greater rigour with which the Muslim law is enforced among the marabouts, there was nothing to show in the superior looks of their wives and daughters that they were generally of any other race than the Kabyles. Of one thing there is no doubt at all: Arab blood, even among these marabouts, is rare, and its accompanying characteristics—physical and mental—almost entirely absent. Women may not inherit land, and two squared Roman stones are set up in the midst of Djemaa Seridj as a testimony to the law. Among the men a kind of *métayage* is often practised, but there is no common cultivation, and the Berbers are as confirmed individualists as ourselves, whence the smiling, prosperous appearance of their country. Every man works, if not wholly for himself and his family, at least in the assurance that an increase of his industry will produce an immediate proportional increase in his fortune. In social and political organisation, in the art of agriculture, in domestic industries, the Berber is far ahead of the miserable mujiks of Russia, and perhaps very little, if at all, behind a portion of the agricultural population of our own islands which still retains the pleasing simplicity of communal life inherited from far-off ages.

The missionaries could give but a qualified assent to the much vaunted Kabyle honesty. There is a certain "slimness" about most farming people all the world over which it would be unfair to call by a harsher name, and which, after all, is generally reserved for purely agricultural dealings. The diversion of a water supply, the removal of a neighbour's land-mark, the poaching of pasturage, all these and many other devices are not unknown in Great Kabylia. On the other hand, only professional robbers, who are rare, break into houses, and scarcely any article is stolen unless it has been locked up—for the Kabyle regards this as a reflection on his honesty and behaves "*à la guerre, comme à la guerre.*"

An unpleasant feature of Berber life is the vendetta. Shortly before our visit the old kaid was shot, through the open door, as he sat in his own house. This was the result of a family feud, and though there was little doubt about the identity of the murderer, popular sentiment had so far shielded him from the arm of the law. We were willing to believe that this incident, with its accompanying sense of unrest, combined with the memory of visits from the lower class of "colonists," had been the cause of our inhospitable reception by the Kabyles at Djemaa Seridj.

The distance hence to Tizi-Ouzou is about twenty kilometers. The highroad is soon struck, and by it we reached the town after a four hours' ride through the same rolling low country which we had passed in the morning.

Light showers fell at intervals, and a splendid rainbow rested one end upon the mountains to the left, the other on the waters of the Wed Sabaou. The road runs through the alluvial plain formed by this river, and by its side grows every kind of lovely wild flower in a mad profusion of colour. Thatched Kabyle huts with storks standing on one leg in their nests upon the roofs, ruinous French farm-

houses among groves of gum-trees, were the only landmarks save the slow-passing kilometer posts. Dusk came down upon the hills, the frogs croaked in a mighty chorus in the marshes which ghostly avenues of eucalyptus, whose branches almost met across the road, were slowly drying, purifying, and redeeming for a future race of colonists. Lights twinkled out of the darkness, passed, and still no sign of Tizi-Ouzou. Towards nine o'clock the mules assumed a brisker gait. Dogs began to bark, and in an instant, as it seemed, we were among the lamps and murmur of the town.

Tizi-Ouzou, rebuilt after its sack by the Kabyles in '71, is now a fair-sized city, with, however, a predominant native population. Its streets are wide, its houses mostly of one story, while immense groves of eucalyptus close it in on every side, and strive in vain to give it the appearance of a back-blocks township of Australia. We were obliged to wait a day or two for the arrival of our pottery from Tamaocht. One morning two old Kabyle women presented themselves with a great load of gaudy camels and pitchers in their arms. They had walked all the way from Tamaocht, four or five hours at the least, and rivers to be crossed on the way. Thus they kept their part of the contract, and we hope they were as satisfied with the way we absolved ourselves from ours.

The faithful guide who had been with us during all our wanderings in Great Kabylia reluctantly took his departure, bearing with him all the old clothes we could spare, and, much to his delight, our two billies as well. He tried hard to persuade us to let him come to England, but the introduction of a mature Kabyle, who knew no word of English, and whose only point of contact with our manners and customs was a deplorable affection for the flowing bowl into a sober and respectable British household was not to

be contemplated. However, we parted the best of friends, and if the other Kabyles with whom we had to do were half so satisfied with us as Amar, our successors in the villages of Great Kabylia need not fear for their reception.

The train whirled us at a dizzy dozen miles an hour into Algiers, and there my story ends.

CHAPTER XII

ALGERIAN ANTI-SEMITISM

THE last we saw of Algiers was the end of the quay wall. On that point of vantage was inscribed, in letters of enormous size, "A BAS LES JUIFS!" This chapter is a short commentary on that ominous phrase; it does not profess to deal exhaustively with the subject; it is only an attempt to set forth the impressions of two casual travellers in Algeria as to the causes and manifestations of an Anti-Semitic feeling. To this end I have drawn copious extracts from an Algerian journal, widely read, and apparently well adapted to the taste of nearly all classes of readers. I say "nearly all," for I do not believe the best-educated Frenchmen have any desire to plunder and expel the Jews either from France or from Algeria. With this reservation the "people" of Algiers would seem to be violently Anti-Semitic, and, indeed, it declared itself to be so, publicly, in the face of all the world, on the occasion of the municipal elections in May last.

We have seen how an Alsatian tradesman will inscribe on his card, "No dealings with Jews," how a blackguardly Arab will curse his mule with the French phrase, "Quel Juif!"; but I have not told how Kabyles use the same term of abuse to one another, and how large French shops at Algiers will post a notice in their windows, "Maison Non-juive."

It has been pointed out, perhaps a little extravagantly that the Arabs with whom we came in contact were, not to mince matters, thieves ; that they were apparently incapable of an honest commercial transaction, and that they were also, for the most part, fools. Now the Jews of Algeria may, for all I know, be thieves too—those we met were certainly not so—but it was obvious that, whatever their commercial *morality*, it was not worse than that of the Arabs, and that their commercial *capacity* was many thousand times better. Here is, then, one clear and sufficient reason for the hatred of the Jews by the Arabs. The Arab is a thief and a fool ; the Jew—we will say for the sake of argument—is a thief, but a clever man. Under these circumstances the Arab goes to the wall, and he, being at once avaricious and incapable of gratifying his passion, is naturally incensed against the apparent author of his misfortunes. Add to jealousy the prejudice excited by religious differences, and we have two very good reasons why the Arab and the worse class of French and Latin colonists hate the Jews.

In the case of the Arabs there is a further source of bitterness. They have not the franchise, the Jews have it. Thus the French people have attested their valuation of the intelligence and capacity for self-government possessed by Jews and Arabs respectively. They have stated, so to speak, officially, that they recognise the Jews as superior in brain, superior in moral fibre, to the Arab. This the Arabs do not forget or forgive—either to Frenchman or to Jew.

As to the Kabyles, their case is different. Until their last insurrection they retained the forms of self-government under which they had lived for untold generations. They lost these liberties in war and they do not therefore feel that the Jews are a superior people. Only they see that the Jews were wise in their generation when they helped

the French, and for this they hate them, not less than they hate the French, their conquerors, nor less than they hate the Arabs, their ancient oppressors—the usurpers and despoilers of their country.

I mentioned how at Constantine the Jews go in fear of the Arabs. We shall see from the following extract whether or no they have reason to go in fear of the French in Algiers. The title of the journal from which it is taken is *L'Antijuif Algérien*, and it heads its columns with two emphatic declarations of policy, "L'Algérie aux Français!" and, "À la Porte les Juifs!" of the first of which I shall have something to say later. The number is dated May 22nd, 1900, and is full of jubilation over the return of the notorious Max Régis—then in exile—as Mayor of Algiers. Under the circumstances it might have been expected to show a little magnanimity, but this is what it actually publishes in an article headed "Juifs . . . fuyez!"

"Comme au lendemain d'un meurtrier combat les généreux pioupious de France, sur le champ de bataille, tendent une main secourable et loyale à leurs ennemis vaincus, nous vous crions, nous, patriotes français : Juifs, garde à vous . . . fuyez.

"Vous avez accumulé tant d'infamies, vous avez semé tant de ruines, vous avez si ignoblement souillé l'armée, trafiqué de notre Drapeau, enfin tant de haines sont amoncellées contre vous, que le bon peuple vient de vous signifier encore une fois, l'ordre de fuir notre territoire.

"C'est la dernière signification de l'arrêt du suffrage national, avant exécution.

"Juifs ! comprendrez-vous enfin combien votre séjour est devenu impossible chez nous ? Aurez-vous assez de compréhension pour juger par vous-mêmes que la France ne peut plus et ne veut plus tolérer chez elle une race aussi infecte que la vôtre ?

“ La manifestation de nos sentiments à votre égard a été écrasante, quoique bien pacifique, le 6 mai.

“ Attendez-vous qu'elle soit sanctionnée par la violence? Obligez-vous le peuple algérien à employer la force pour vous chasser de l'Algérie?

“ Fuyez, juifs.

“ Nous ne faisons pas appel à vos bons sentiments! Vous n'en avez jamais eu, vous n'en aurez jamais : vous y êtes réfractaires inaccessibles.

“ Nous frappons sur le coffre fort qui vous tient lieu de cœur et de conscience et nous vous disons : juifs ! les beaux jours ont fui pour vous ; ce coffre qui jadis crevait de pléthore, ne verra plus l'argent que des goyms égarés ou inconscients lui apportaient encore hier en pâture ; vos ghettos ont été définitivement désertés ; vos opérations commerciales surveillées par une municipalité patriote ; vos fraudes rigoureusement poursuivies ; vos vols dénoncés : vous serez contraints à l'observation des règles d'honneur et de probité qui sont la gloire et l'apanage du commerce français.

“ Pour vous cette honnêteté sera la ruine, la faillite—non fictive celle-là—à brève échéance, avec ses conséquences.

“ C'est la justice, c'est l'expertise de vos livres, l'enquête sur vos méfaits, vos fraudes, vos subornations, c'est la condamnation, la saisie de ce qui vous est le plus cher : votre or et vos propriétés ; c'est l'expropriation prochaine ; enfin, la juste restitution à la société, à la Nation, du produit de vos vols.

“ Restitution ! Vous frémissiez, juifs ! Il vous semble qu'on vous arrache déjà les entrailles ! Chaque écu repris par vos victimes vous fait hurler d'avance de douleur comme si on vous dépeçait par lambeaux.

“ Fuyez, juifs ! dès maintenant, de suite, sur le champ.

"Partez, pour éviter ces douleurs aigües, ces justes représailles.

"Au nom de votre caisse et pour sa sauvegarde, juifs, fuyez.

"Écoutez la voix de vos intérêts, la plus puissante pour vous : Fuyez.

"N'attendez pas que le peuple se lève et vous écrase ; craignez son courroux : Fuyez.

"Le feu est au ghetto ; sauvez-vous avant qu'il ne s'effondre sur vous et n'ensevelisse sous les décombres vos pourritures et votre or.

"Redevenez ce que vous étiez primitivement : *des juifs errants* ; mais que vos savates ne frôlent plus le sol de notre Patrie dans vos pérégrinations.

"Juifs . . . Fuyez !"

This article, which is here reprinted without alteration of any kind, is signed in full, but, for obvious reasons, I omit the signature.

In the same paper is a paragraph which I hesitate to reproduce ; it is, however, interesting for the light it sheds on the class of people to whose passions the *Antijuif* is addressed, and who alone would be likely to appreciate the humour, such as it is, of the story.

"CULOT JUIF.—Vendredi dernier, au Casino Music-Hall, deux fils de la race d'Israël avaient le culot d'occuper les deux places que la direction de cet établissement réserve au journal.

"Inutile de dire s'ils furent délogés avec perte et fracas par un de nos collaborateurs.

"Nous serions reconnaissants à M. Provost, de faire désinfecter les fauteuils 24 et 25, car la peste judaïque est fort à craindre en Algérie."

So it is not only in Constantine that the Jews have to fear assaults on their persons ; some of their opponents in

Algiers do not stop short of inflicting upon them bodily hurt. The state of mind of the writers of these two extracts is not far removed from that of a man who advocates the commission of a crime. How long will it be before the scum of the city, already at one with the *Antijuif* in its general policy, will do the dirty work of which its organ is enamoured? Next time the populace decides to plunder the Jews it will be assured of the benevolent neutrality of the municipal authorities, and it is unlikely to stop short at incendiarism and pillage. And for this event "papers" such as the *Antijuif* will be largely responsible.

Nor is the anti-Semitic fever in its more virulent forms confined to Algeria. Europe is saturated with it, still France has perhaps the highest temperature. The following extract is from the *Téléjuif*:—

"Gloire à Max Régis, honneur à l'Algérie, la ligue de Nancy est fière de ses amis."

"Proud of its friends!" God help the League of Nancy! Let us suppose that the Jews are driven from Algeria as they were driven from Spain. We have seen that they are, by implication, acknowledged to be the successful traders of the country. How much better off will Algeria find itself without its business heads, while a mixed mob of Latins and Arabs wrangles over the prey?

That word "prey" suggests the phrase "L'Algérie aux Français." Do the Spaniards and Italians that clamour in broken French or in their own vernacular against the Jews imagine that their own status will be benefited by the expulsion of the first of the non-French elements? Let them cherish no such illusion. They, too, will have to go "*avec perte et fracas*," and the country will have peace forty years.

But then the Arabs—what will they do? Will they sit calmly by, each man in his tent door, and see the caravans

assaulted one by one and plundered of their goods? "*Astaghfir Allah!*" ("I ask pardon of God!") "No! We shall mount our horses, take our long guns in our hands, and sally forth, after the manner of our people, to spoil the spoilers."

Last of all the Berbers. Watching intently from the mountain-tops the progress of the world beneath them, they know their opportunity will come when factions sunder Europeans the one from the other. If the Christians and the Arabs come to blows, each seeking to despoil his neighbour, then will the Berbers resume the mastery of their own land.

But for the present it is a sorry sight to contemplate, this reckless hatred, this contempt of a race which, whatever its faults, is at least among the best elements in the country—this insane desire to slay the goose that lays the golden eggs.

"À la Porte les Juifs!" But what of the wolf that seeks to enter where the Jews go out?

If the Jews are peacefully deprived of their possessions, peacefully exported to a shore more hospitable, history teaches what will happen to the country that expels, what to the land that welcomes, them. Commercially, Algeria is still an infant. Without the aid of these who have the capital to bring it safely up to manhood, it will wax feebler and feebler until the world will say, "It never lived. It was stillborn." That is, even from the point of view of a "good Antijuif" (with a stake in the country), a most undesirable consummation of his policy.

If, on the other hand, the Jews are pillaged and murdered, their houses sacked and burnt—and this, I confess, considering the inflammable nature of the Latin mind, is the more probable contingency—Algeria will not only lose its commerce, but it will lose its reputation among

civilised people ; it will be no longer a resort for visitors, a field for enterprise. And that is the most undesirable consummation of all.

Loss of fortune is bad ; loss of honour is worse. The Antijuif is doing what he can to bring both these disasters on his country.

Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat.

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